

# Evaluation of Salford Youthbuild

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<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>1: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
What was the Salford Youthbuild project?	1
What did the programme for young people consist of?	2
What were Salford Youthbuild's specific aims and objectives?	2
The evaluation	3
<b>2: Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
Data sources and methods	4
Primary data and method	4
Youthbuild clients	6
Youthbuild staff	8
Youthbuild employers	9
Secondary data sources	11
Analysis of data and presentation of findings	12
Quantitative data	12
Qualitative data	12
Summary	13
<b>3: Who were the young people?</b>	<b>14</b>
Numbers and referrals	14
Young people – characteristics	15
Age and Sex	15
Family and Living arrangements	15
Housing arrangements	15
Social care background	16
Family support	17
Education, training and employment background	18
Education and training background	18
Work background	19
Attitudes to work	21
Offending behaviour	23
Previous convictions	23
Coping with life	27
Self-esteem	27
Lifestyle	28
Health	28
Substance misuse	29

Young people's self-perceived needs and expectations	29
Summary	31
<b>4: Implementing Youthbuild – Set-up and the training period</b>	<b>32</b>
Set-up and implementation	32
Physical environment and conditions	32
Preparation and organisation	33
Managing the young people	35
Expectations and responsibilities	35
Appropriate referral and selection	37
The training period and supporting the young people	39
Training, and ideas for the future	39
Supporting the young person during the training phase	40
Summary	41
<b>5: Implementing Youthbuild – The trial and full--pay periods</b>	<b>42</b>
The project-employer relationship	42
Arrangement of placements and employer support	42
The good and bad worker from the employers' perspective	43
Communication with employers and concerns about exploitation	44
The young people on-site	45
Into placement: the culture shock	45
Men or boys: Keyworker support or wiping babies' arses?	47
Understanding the young people's problems and flexibility	49
Resentment at low wages, and reaping the rewards	49
Transition to full-pay placement – increased employer interest	50
Summary	51
<b>6: How the young people got on 1 – Progress and employment success</b>	<b>52</b>
Completion and positive progress	52
Factors affecting positive progress	55
Education, training and employment	56
Employment activity since Youthbuild – and the turnaround in fortunes	58
Attitudes to work	61
Perceptions of Youthbuild's help	64
Summary	68
<b>7 : How the young people got on 2 – Offending and lifestyle</b>	<b>69</b>
Offending behaviour	69
Coping with life	72
Self-esteem	72
Lifestyle	74
Life skills and taking responsibility	75

Health	76
Substance misuse	77
Homelife and relationships	77
Living arrangements	77
Relationships and family support	79
Success stories	81
Summary	81
<b>8: Conclusion and recommendations</b>	<b>83</b>
Summary of chapters	83
The impact of Youthbuild	83
The impact of Youthbuild on the young people	83
The impact of Youthbuild on the staff	87
The impact of Youthbuild on the employers	88
Youthbuild: A summary of successes and problems	88
Successes	88
Problems and limitations	89
Did Youthbuild meet its objectives?	90
Recommendations for similar projects	91
Final thoughts and looking to the future	93
About the authors	95

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## Executive Summary

### *Introduction (Chapter 1)*

This report presents the results of the evaluation of Salford Youthbuild during its year of existence, from April 2008 to March 2009. Salford Youthbuild offered local young people, who were disengaged from the labour market and at risk of offending, a period of training (5 weeks) and work experience (8 months) in the construction industry. The main aims and objectives focused around increasing access to employment, employability, and reducing offending.

### *Methods (Chapter 2)*

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in order to provide a (a) process evaluation recording the story of Youthbuild in its first year, and (b) impact evaluation examining the effect of Youthbuild on the lives of those involved. These included:

- Quantitative Client assessment forms (n26); client self-completion questionnaires (n26 at T1, n91 at T2); client assessment meeting with staff
- Qualitative 2 sets of interviews with staff (7 in total); interviews with clients (n10); interviews with employers (n6)
- Secondary Youthbuild project data, documentation and records

### *Who were the young people? (Chapter 3)*

- 26 young people took part in Salford Youthbuild; 12 in the first cohort and 14 in the second cohort. The majority were referred by the local Youth Offending Service. They were all young males, ranged between 15 and 19 years old (with one 25 yr old) with an average age of 17 years old.
- Most lived with their families, but half were having difficulties with living arrangements and relationships that would make employment harder. They all lived in problematic neighbourhoods. The large majority had had contact with social services in the past, with a quarter having been in care.
- The majority had been at work for at least six months, and almost all had problems directly related to education/training/employment (eg lacked basic skills or strained relations with employers). Two-thirds had not had training or education in the last year.
- Most clients had a pretty positive attitude to work, although a sizeable minority found it unsatisfying. Most felt they already had the necessary skills, although they also recognised some difficulties here.
- All the young people had been in trouble with the police, with a mean average of 7.2 convictions each. The average first conviction was aged 15 years. The majority were still on a Court Order at the start of their Youthbuild programme. Over the four weeks previous to starting Youthbuild, they had committed a median average of 11 offences. Offence types were fairly varied, but violent offences were carried out by two-thirds of clients, averaging 5 offences over four weeks. Three-quarters admitted that they had difficulty keeping out of trouble.
- Self esteem was generally high, except for self-doubt in relation to achievements and roles/status.

- Clients led unstructured lives that would make employability harder, with the large majority hanging around with offending peers, and staying out at nights.
- Health problems were a dominant characteristic for the majority of clients, with 15 having physical health problems and 13 having emotional health problems. Almost all had substance misuse problems that would affect employability.
- Two-thirds were looking forward to taking part in Youthbuild, with the majority of clients looking forward to finding a job at the end of it.

#### ***Implementing Youthbuild – Set-up and the training period (Chapter 4)***

- Staff saw their recruitment as being somewhat rushed, with delayed start dates and some staff turnover at the beginning of the project.
- Some client 'issues' were not immediately apparent at the client recruitment stage (these emerged over the course of the project).
- The physical environment of the Youthbuild site was not ideal for the project's requirements (e.g. lack of adequate heating and kitchen facilities, dusty flooring material, limitations with training space).
- Limited project lead-in time saw some early problems with project clarity and organisation (for both staff and clients).
- There were some initial problems with managing client expectations and behaviour.
- Better communication, feedback and guidance from NCH would have helped staff in the implementation of the project.
- Staff worked pragmatically in the early stages of the project to deal with emerging client needs and issues (this often involved a 'division of labour' according to individual staff past experience and practitioner background).
- Experience gained from the early stages of the project led to reflective practice as the project developed (e.g. learning from practice and management of client cohort 1 led to improved practice and management of client cohort 2).
- The keyworker role developed into a multi-faceted one.

#### ***Implementing Youthbuild – The trial and full-pay periods (Chapter 5)***

- Staff felt to some degree they had to 'pitch' the project and 'sell' the clients to employers.
- There was however a high level of support for the project from placement employers.
- Employers had clear ideas about what characterised "good kids" or "good workers".
- Employers looked negatively upon certain client characteristics, including bad behaviour, poor attitude and lack of preparedness for the demands of the construction site.
- The demands of the construction site were as much 'cultural' as they were demands on building skills and competencies. This resulted in apparent 'cultural shock' for the less prepared or less mature young people.
- There was a definite sense that employers thought of clients and "their lads" once they'd moved from training to placement.
- Keyworker support for the clients continued into the placement phase. However, this was sometimes perceived by employers as, in effect, 'mothering'.
- Employers nevertheless were not insensitive to the backgrounds and needs of Youthbuild clients.

- Keyworkers were similarly not insensitive to the demands of the construction site, and accommodated to this by, for example, avoiding meeting clients in situations that could cause embarrassment or foster impressions of mothering.
- Employers expressed regret that the project had to end.

#### *How the young people got on – Progress and employment success (Chapter 6)*

- The extent of progress through the programme was mixed. Almost all finished the initial classroom/ workshop training period, and all who needed it obtained their CSCS card to enable work on-site. 10 out of 26 completed the end of the placement period. 8 achieved employment at the end (31% of all) (low partly due to market conditions), with 4 leaving for ETE during the programme – so 46% had a “positive ETE outcome”. This contrasted with 92% not in ETE prior in the month prior to Youthbuild. 54% had the “positive progression outcome” of either completing or leaving to find ETE. Youthbuild was perceived by these as giving them a “second chance”.
- Reasons for leaving early varied, but decisions that the work “wasn’t for me” and on-site personality clashes were a feature. Again, this pointed to problems adapting to “working site culture”.
- Four factors were statistically related to having “positive progression outcome”: not previously excluded from school; not having health problems that put employability at risk; stability at school; not having “only done work for the money” previously; and not having “tended to avoid work” in the past. These factors show clearly that having the more challenging young people (in terms of background, health and attitudes) will lower progression measures of success.
- There was a dramatic reduction in numbers considered to have ETE specific problems, or have these considered to affect employability. Indeed, for half of clients, this was now considered a positive factor.
- The average wage for those working jumped considerably compared to previous jobs, positively affecting quality of life. Although the majority still had financial difficulties, there were no longer any clients earning money in “dodgy ways” – Youthbuild offered them a legitimate route.
- Attitudes to work remained high, and with an increase in a job’s intrinsic satisfaction.
- The large majority of clients considered Youthbuild to be helpful, with two-thirds perceiving it “very helpful”. The majority perceived help beyond positive employment progression, including life skills, confidence and meeting new people. Any complaints included employment disappointments.

#### *How the young people got on – Offending and lifestyle (Chapter 7)*

- There was a big change in offending behaviour in clients over the course of their involvement in Youthbuild. Both involvement with the criminal justice system, and self-perceptions of staying out of trouble reduced dramatically. Median average offences over four weeks reduced from 11 to 2. Of those who previously admitted offending during period prior to Youthbuild, a third desisted completely in the period after.
- The range of offence type reduced from 4 to 1, with the number of clients involved in any types of violent offences in the previous 4 weeks reduced from two-thirds to less than a third. Theft was reduced the most. Generally, only buying drugs for own use remained a substantial category of offending.



- Reasons given for desistance related to four themes: too tired after work; did not need the money anymore; did not want to spoil the employment opportunity; and they had matured during their involvement.
- Self-esteem continued to be high, and there was a positive shift in feelings related to status and achievement. However, the majority still felt that they were having problems in at least one area of their lives that would affect future prospects.
- There were improvements in lifestyle, suggesting positive structure. A lot less stayed out late at night (46% from 88%), and hanging around with offending peer was cut from almost all to two-thirds. This again was linked to maturing through the project – tying in with the transition from youth to man that was the cultural focus on the building site.
- There was clear qualitative evidence of the development of interpersonal skills and taking responsibility.
- There was a dramatic improvement in health, where problems that had beset all clients were reduced to less than a third. Problems affecting employment was reduced from three in four to one in four. However, for a small number emotional issues may be exacerbated on-site.
- Substance misuse was reduced from almost all to just over half (54%) of clients, with a reduction in those perceived to have, or reporting, “problematic” drug use.
- Difficulties with living arrangements continued to affect clients, with about half considered to have problems that would affect employability.
- There was an improvement in relationship problems with family and friends. However, there was a worsening of levels of support generally (62% to 50% problematic) and in particular relation to their involvement with Youthbuild. Where it existed, motivational and practical/financial support was considered important. Where it did not, it was sometimes supplemented by support from Youthbuild staff.

### *Conclusion and recommendations (Chapter 8)*

- There have been substantial positive changes in these young people’s lives, which can reasonably be accredited to Salford Youthbuild – at least as the catalyst for change.
- The project made substantial contributions to several indicators of improvement across the NCH Outcomes Framework (based on Every Child Matters)
- Salford Youthbuild success depended on the commitment, pragmatism and reflective practice of staff. It also had a mutually beneficial relationship with employers.
- Key successes for the project included varied support, providing employment opportunities, client satisfaction, dramatic reductions in offending behaviour, dramatic improvements in health, reduction in substance misuse, improvement of life skills, and substantial reduction in ETE problems.
- Key limitations and challenges included lack of lead-in time, some perceived organisational support issues, lack of partnership from other agencies, delays in some placements, limited preparedness of clients for the cultural pressures of construction work, tensions between support needs and the ‘macho’ occupational culture, risk of employer exploitation, lack of familial support, the economic downturn, and the abrupt curtailment of support when funding for the project ended.
- The project largely met any written objectives, particularly in relation to reducing offending behaviour and improving employability.

- Key recommendations included early work on agency partnership, establishing links with clients' families, learning agreements with clients to clarify expectations, and more emphasis and activities to prepare clients for the demands of work culture (particularly 'on-site culture').
- Given the positive journeys for the young people involved, it was regrettable that the funding ended, and support restarting the project or learning lessons from the experience.
- The essence of the experience for young people was an intervention that enabled a transition from young offender to valued member of the community, through cultural shifts. It saw clients negotiate some difficult rites of passage involved the 'lads' becoming responsible 'men'. It showed how local partnerships can enable this transition.
- The project raised far-reaching questions about how to better prepare young people for the cultural transition to the culture of work, facilitating this personal transition. It also raised issues for how to support needy young clients within a very masculine construction culture.

# 1 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief overview of the Salford Youthbuild project, including its programme intention and any aims and objectives. It also lists the aims for the evaluation.

## What was the Salford Youthbuild project?

The Salford Youthbuild project was a community based intervention for young people at risk of offending, operated by the National Children's Homes (now Action for Children) in partnership with Salford City Council, in North West England. It was funded through the Government's Youth Taskforce as part of Salford attaining "Respect Area" status. The project ran from April 2008 to March 2009, at which time funding was no longer available. Essentially, Youthbuild would take disadvantaged young people (18-24 years old) who were disengaged from the labour market and offered them training and experience in the construction industry, with a view to improving their employability and preventing offending.

The Youthbuild format had been tried successfully in other parts of the UK (notably in parts of Scotland), both by NCH and other NGOs, and before that in a slightly different form in the United States<sup>1</sup>. NCH had previously run a Youthbuild project in Glasgow, Scotland. However, Salford Youthbuild was different from this and many other Youthbuild projects in its particular emphasis on preventing youth offending – while not being part of a Court Order. Many Youthbuild voluntary projects have not specifically targeted young people who were at risk of offending through, for example, Youth Offending Teams. As such, the subheading on the projects literature for other agencies was *"Providing opportunities for young people whilst striving to reduce reoffending"*.<sup>2</sup>

The wider Youthbuild UK organisation, of which Action for Children is a contributor, states that its movement has *"a commitment to young adults that enables and supports their rites of passage in becoming valued members of society through recognising their own worth and citizenship skills"*.<sup>3</sup>

It was intended that the young people on the project would be exposed to a wide range of training and employment help, *"equipping them with the tools to overcome barriers, thus providing them with the opportunity to meet their full potential"*<sup>4</sup>. The project was planned to focus on *"induction and preparation, work experience, key relevant training, personal support, and core skills and development"*. Project Workers would be assigned as keyworkers to each young person, charged with *"overcoming any issues affecting their participation"*.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org) and [www.youthbuildinternational.org](http://www.youthbuildinternational.org) for details of the U.S. and international versions of the project. Youthbuild UK is an umbrella group for similar projects around the UK (<http://www.youthbuild-uk.org/index.php>). "Kibbleworks" (<http://www.kibble.org/kibbleworks/>) is a similar affiliated project in Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> Youthbuild Information for Agencies leaflet (2008)

<sup>3</sup> Youthbuild UK Charter (2009:4) [[http://www.youthbuild-uk.org/images/02\\_yb\\_introduction.pdf](http://www.youthbuild-uk.org/images/02_yb_introduction.pdf)]

<sup>4</sup> NCH Youthbuild Project Brief. Presented at the "Salford Youthbuild Breakfast Meeting", 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008, Salford Keys. This 'launch meeting' was attended by the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and local MP, Hazel Blears.

## **What did the programme for young people consist of?**

The project took on two cohorts of clients during its year of operation. Each cohort would spend 9 months on a programme divided into three clear phases:

### ***1) Training period (5 weeks)***

Clients spent an initial period of training in preparation for their site placement. This time was spent on Youthbuild premises, and the training was led primarily by the Youthbuild staff. The clients were involved in personal development work, studying for a health and safety certificate to enable them to work on-site (CSCS card), and construction skills learning. The last of these was given by experienced builders coming on-site and was carried out in a workshop attached to the Youthbuild offices and classroom. They would receive lunch and travel subsidies from the project, and continue to receive their normal statutory benefits etc.

### ***2) Trial period (8 weeks)***

Following completion of the classroom based training period, clients would be placed full-time with a construction company. Each young person would spend two months on a kind of probationary period, where they would continue to receive the same benefits. Clients would normally be expected to have employment as general labourers, although they may begin to work alongside specific tradesmen.

### ***3) Fully-paid placement period (6 months)***

Following successful completion of the trial period, it was expected that the construction firm would contractually employ the client on wages equivalent to the 'going rate' for their other workers. Half of this salary would be paid by the project. During this period, it was intended that the clients would be visited by Youthbuild staff a minimum of once a week. At the end of this period it was hoped that the firm would offer extended employment to the young person.

## **What were Salford Youthbuild's specific aims and objectives?**

The project had various aims and objectives and stated in different documentation. The project's literature to agencies and employers stated that its central aim was:

*"to enable young people to successfully access employment by challenging such issues as barriers, instilling confidence and ability through comprehensive on-going training, support, guidance and aftercare".<sup>2</sup>*

The Partnership Development Brief, produced at the project's launch in May 2008 listed the following objectives:

- A reduction in offending behaviour
- A reduction in anti-social behaviour
- Improvements in learning and employability
- Help construction partners meet their corporate social responsibilities
- Offer recruitment opportunities in an increasingly difficult skilled labour market

In addition, the Project Outline, also produced at the launch, and incorporating findings from a feasibility study, listed the rather more specific objective of sustainable employment outcomes for 80% of the programmes first cohort.

## **The evaluation**

The evaluation of Youthbuild by the University of Salford was funded for a twelve month period from Spring 2008 to Spring 2009. The research had four main aims examining both the operation of and outcomes from the project:

### ***Process evaluation:***

- To record the process of establishing Youthbuild in Salford through its first year.
- To learn lessons of good practice etc to improve roll-out to other areas.

### ***Impact evaluation:***

- To assess the impact and effectiveness of Youthbuild on the lives of the young people involved, including offending rates and “soft” indicators (e.g. self-esteem; quality of life). This would include attempts to measure “progress” (previously problematic for Youthbuild evaluations).
- To assess the impact of the Youthbuild as a whole, including relationships with employers.

The next chapter will detail the approach and research methods employed in the evaluation in order to meet these aims.

## 2 Methodology

In this chapter we outline the research design for this study. The research strategy (data sources, collection methods, analysis and presentation) has been carefully designed to achieve the aims set out in the previous chapter, whilst being sensitive to the particularities of the context in which the research has been carried out, the participants, and the emergent features of both the research process and the project itself. The methods chosen are drawn from standard academic practice and have proven themselves to be appropriate and effective in previous studies of this nature.

### Data sources and methods

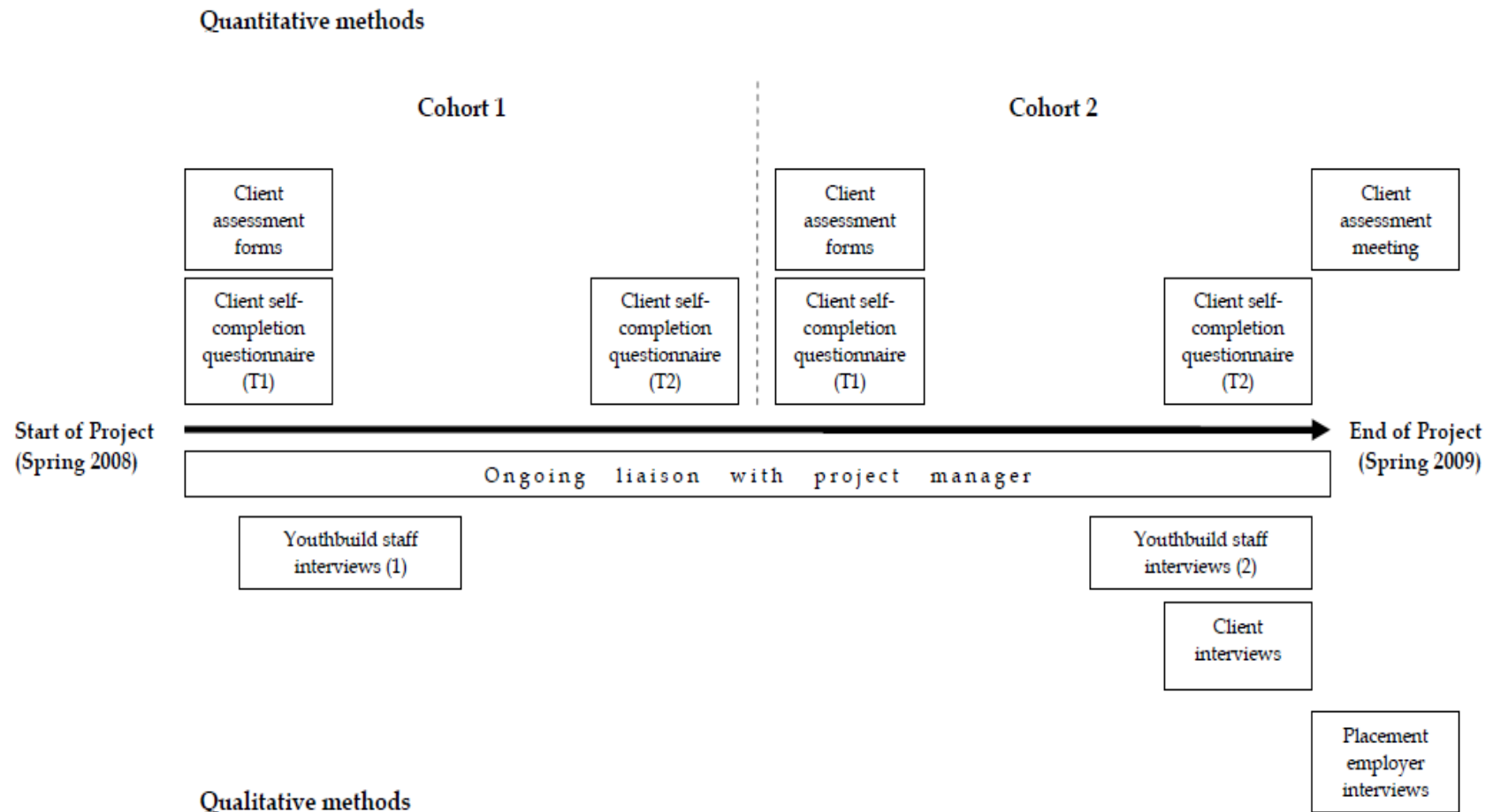
The data for the study came from various primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered via collection methods specifically designed for this study (fig 2.1). Secondary data came from a variety of documents and records that were completed as part and parcel of the normal running of the project itself. Together, these data provided a rich and deep source of information on the project and its participants.

### *Primary data and methods*

We began by gaining as much data as possible about each of the Youthbuild clients. We wanted here to provide as full a description as possible of each individual client as well as gain an overview more generally of the type of young person who was participating in the project. Importantly, we wanted to establish a set of baseline criteria against which later outcomes could be measured. The first tool we used was a client assessment form, which provided a range of data on each individual Youthbuild client. Next, we gathered data via client self-completion (T1) questionnaires. These questionnaires were then followed up by a second (T2) questionnaire upon completion of the project for each of the client two cohorts. We were also very much interested in the *experience* of participation in Youthbuild. To that end, in addition to the data drawn from the T1 and T2 self-completion questionnaires, we conducted a series of depth interview with clients, which allowed us to probe issues more deeply than allowed for via pre-formatted questions in the questionnaires. Finally, we held a post-project client assessment meeting with the project manager, during which, for each client we completed a second client assessment form and revisited the initial client forms in order to gauge levels of success for each particular client.

As well as gathering data on the clients themselves, we felt it important to achieve what we would term a 'triangulation of perspectives and experiences'. What we mean here is recognising that the Youthbuild project consisted of three 'key participants': *the clients, Youthbuild staff, and placement employers*. To that extent we designed further tools that also allowed us to obtain data on both Youthbuild staff and placement employer perspectives and experiences. These took the form of depth interviews (face-to-face and telephone). In the case of Youthbuild staff, as well as capturing experiences of the management of the project over its duration, we were also keen to obtain some degree of 'before' (expectation and anticipation) and 'after' (reflection and evaluation) perspective, and so timed our interviews to take place at the outset and on completion of the project (see fig. 2.1).

Figure. 2.1: Primary research design



## ***Youthbuild clients***

### *Client assessment form*

The client assessment form was a variation of the ASSET tool used for risk assessment of young people in the youth justice system. We adapted sections in the ASSET tool that deal with key areas of the young person's life, but altered assessment to address 'employability' rather than offending. The form was structured around a series of main sections, each containing a sub-set of questions on particular issues. The sections were: Personal Details and Background, Living Arrangements, Family and Personal relationships, Education, Training and Employment, Neighbourhood, Lifestyle, Substance Use, Health and Positive Factors. In addition to providing important information on each of the clients, these forms included Youthbuild staff's assessment of risk factors for offending.

The method of administration was that a member of the Youthbuild staff would complete the forms for each client, with the client present. In total 26 forms were completed.

### *Client self-completion questionnaires (T1)*

The client self-completion questionnaires (T1) contained main sections on the following areas: Education, Employment and Income, Getting into Trouble, How do you Feel?, and Youthbuild. The latter three of these sections were of particular interest to us. For example, in the Getting into Trouble section, by asking the clients about the type of illegal activities they'd been involved in in the 8 weeks immediately prior to joining Youthbuild, we obtained data on criminal activity that would not have appeared on any official record (i.e. for which the clients had been neither caught nor convicted). Under the How do you Feel section, we obtained important data about what clients thought and felt about themselves, allowing us an insight into client self-concept and to gauge levels of self-esteem. Finally, the Youthbuild section supplied useful data about clients' expectations and anticipations about participating in the Youthbuild project.

The self-completion questionnaire (T1) was administered for each of the two cohorts at the beginning of their participation in the project (within 2 weeks of starting). Clients completed the forms on their own at the Youthbuild base room, with one of us and a member of Youthbuild staff on hand in an adjacent room in case help or assistance was needed. In total 26 questionnaires (T1) were completed.

### *Client self-completion questionnaires (T2)*

The self-completion questionnaire (T2) contained sections we were most interested in with the self-completion questionnaire (T1), namely, Getting into Trouble, How do you Feel, and Youthbuild. In addition, a section on Work provided information about clients' employment status at their point of completing Youthbuild. The data derived from these questionnaires allowed us to do a number of things. Addressing the topic of Work



allowed us to gather data on such things as post-Youthbuild employment, current levels of earnings, levels of job satisfaction, as well as overall attitude to work (an issue probed in the self-completion questionnaire (T1)). Returning to the theme of Getting into Trouble provided data on both the frequency and nature of offending since starting on Youthbuild. Next the questions headed How do you Feel allowed to garner data on the impact clients' participation in Youthbuild had had on their self-conceptualisation and levels of self-esteem, as well as their health and general well-being. Finally, the section Youthbuild gave us data about how clients evaluated the project in terms of its helpfulness to them, as well as identifying any general likes or dislikes they had about training, placement, or any other aspect of the project.

The self-completion questionnaires (T2) were again used for each of the two cohorts and were administered at the end of clients' participation in Youthbuild. As with the self-completion questionnaires (T1), clients completed the forms on their own at the Youthbuild base room with one of us and a member of Youthbuild staff were on hand in an adjacent room in case help or assistance was needed. In total 21 questionnaires (T2) were completed.

#### *Client interviews*

Interviews with clients were conducted towards the end of the project. Client reflections on their participation in Youthbuild were seen as the first of our 'triangulation of perspectives and experiences'. Client interviews were semi-structured in nature, that is, we identified a series of themes and issues which we were interested in exploring prior to each interview. These included:

- Clients background
- Degree of participation in Youthbuild
- Experiences of the training and placement phases of the project
- Views about the project (including training, placement and supervision)
- Perceived impact on the client and sense of change
- Ideas for improving similar projects

The data drawn from these interviews yielded important data in a number of ways on issues over the duration of client participation in Youthbuild, from experiences of selection and induction, initial fears and apprehensions, hopes and expectation, through the building up of relationships with Youthbuild staff, experiences on the training phase, finding placements, to reflections on Youthbuild in general, and what it had meant for them in particular.

Interviews were conducted at Youthbuild base room (7) and on-site (3). Interviews typically lasted for around 60 minutes each and were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In total 10 client interviews were conducted.

### *Post-project client assessment form (with project manager)*

Shortly after the completion of the project, we met with the project manager to conduct a client assessment meeting for each of the clients from both cohort's 1 and 2. The main aim here was to revisit the initial client assessment form, completed for each client at their start of the project, by completing a second form for each client following their involvement in the project. This provided further data to allow us to gauge levels of success for each client and for the project in general.

The assessment meeting lasted around 3 hours, during which time each of the clients was considered.

### *Youthbuild staff*

#### *Youthbuild staff interviews (start project)*

All Youthbuild staff were interviewed shortly after the start of the project. Staff reflections were seen as the second of our 'triangulation of perspectives and experiences'. As with clients, the data obtained here would both allow us to take a snapshot of things at the start of the project as well as provide a 'qualitative' baseline against which to measure change at the 'back end' of the project. As with client interviews, Youthbuild staff interviews were semi-structured in nature. Issues we were interested in exploring with Youthbuild staff were:

- Staff professional and occupational background
- Recruitment and selection issues (of both staff and the lads themselves)
- Awareness of the projects aims and objectives
- Setting into roles (especially keyworking)
- Experiences of starting up the project
- Early / emergent issues
- Keyworking experiences
- Anticipation and expectations of the Youthbuild project
- Relationship with and support from management
- Coordination between the project and the work of other youth/support agencies

Again, as with the client interviews, although we had a schedule of themes and issues prior to interview, we were keen to allow each of the staff members to expand on and develop the discussion in any direction they wished, which they invariably did.

Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in the Youthbuild base room staff office. No clients were present when staff interviews were conducted. Interviews typically lasted for around 60 minutes each and all were tape-recorded in full and transcribed verbatim. In total 4 Youthbuild staff interviews were conducted in this first wave.

### *Youthbuild staff interviews (end project)*

3 out of the 4 Youthbuild staff were re-interviewed towards the end of the project. As with the first wave of interviews, this second set were semi-structured in nature. In these interviews several of the issues explored in the first staff interviews were revisited. In addition, the following themes were explored:

- Training experiences
- Reflection on the client placement (including collaboration and communication with employers)
- Any sources of conflict between the Youthbuild agenda and the demands and expectations of site employers
- Support issues (for both the lads and the staff)
- Perceived and observed impact on the lads
- Identification of any 'critical incidents'
- Identification of exemplary clients (those who had succeeded as well as those who were perceived to have failed)
- Reflections and suggestions for improvement on similar projects

Again, interviews were conducted one one-to-one basis in private. All interviews took place in the Youthbuild staff room. Again, no clients were present when this second wave of staff interviews was conducted. Interviews typically lasted for around 60 minutes each and were tape-recorded in full then transcribed verbatim. In total 3 Youthbuild staff interviews were conducted in this wave.

### *Youthbuild employers*

#### *Interviews with employers*

Interviews with placement employers were conducted towards the end of the project. Placement employers were seen as having the third of our 'triangulation of perspectives and experiences'. As with the client and Youthbuild staff interviews, placement employer interviews were semi-structured in nature. Topics covered in the schedule included:

- Details of participation in the project
- General impressions of the project (both the lads on placement and the staff in their role as keyworkers)
- Performance of the lads on placement
- Perceived benefits (for both the lads on placement and themselves as a working site)
- Economic factors affecting placement experience (e.g. the 'credit crunch')
- Suggestions for improvement in future similar projects

All interviews were conducted over the telephone, lasting on average around 30 mins each. All placement employers interviewed were in responsible positions on site and turned out to be invariably very busy. Lunchtime telephone calls seemed to be the most practical way to conduct these interviews, without encroaching on the time and space contingencies of the building-site. The employers 'sample' was chosen on the basis of two things: firstly, the sample included employers who had taken lads from both of the two cohorts; and secondly, the sample included employers who had reported both positive and negative experiences of participation in the project. The selection of the sample in this respect was aided by the Youthbuild manager who provided us with a list of employers, their project involvement details and notes of any positive or negative feedback she had received. Interviews were not recorded verbatim, but rather extended notes were taken. In total staff from 6 different employer sites were conducted.

<i>Table 2.1                      Summary of primary data sources, case numbers, and type of data</i>		
Data source	Number of cases	Data type
Client assessment form	26	Quantitative (staff administered)
Client self-completion questionnaire (T1)	26	Quantitative (self-completion)
Client self-completion questionnaire (T2)	21	Quantitative (self-completion)
Client interviews	10	Semi-structured qualitative (face-to-face)
Youthbuild staff interviews (start project)	4	Semi-structured qualitative (face-to-face)
Youthbuild staff interviews (end project)	3	Semi-structured qualitative ( face-to-face)
Placement employer interviews	6	Semi-structured qualitative (telephone)
Post-project client assessment form	26	Quantitative (staff administered)

### *Secondary data sources*

Alongside the central primary data set, additional secondary sources were made available to us by the Youthbuild team, giving us further information about each of the clients' background histories and details of their progression on the project, as well as providing further insight into the project's management in general.

#### *Youthbuild application forms*

Completed as part of the Youthbuild application process, these forms provided additional individual data for each of the clients. Information gathered from these forms included educational qualifications, employment and training experience up to applying for participation in the project, initial feelings about the project, what clients expected to be doing on the project, and in what ways they thought Youthbuild would benefit them.

#### *Individual record of offending history*

These records of offending history provided details and dates of offences together with information about the various orders and action plans clients were under prior to and at the time of starting Youthbuild.

#### *"Running Records Forms" on each young person*

Each client had an electronic case file, kept by Youthbuild staff, containing details such as keyworker contact, client progression, employer feedback, and a note of any critical incidents on site or in the wider lives of clients.

#### *Site visit forms*

A record of each visit made by staff to clients during placement was kept, providing details of any issues that came up on-site for the young people or the keyworkers.

#### *Letters of warning to clients for poor 'compliance' with expectations while on placement*

These letters allowed for the monitoring of client behaviour whilst in placement and general gauging levels of placement discipline.

#### *Closure Forms – exit forms for when clients left the project early*

Those clients who did not progress to completion were given closure forms by Youthbuild staff. These functioned as 'exit forms' and provided data on those young people who did not complete the self-completion (T2) questionnaire nor were selected from depth interview.

*“Final evaluation reports” by keyworkers on the clients, summarising their story on the programme*

These reports provided information about each of the keyworker’s “lads” and the evaluative comments from the project staff from a keyworker perspective.

### **Analysis of data and presentation of findings**

The qualitative and quantitative data were analysed using appropriate academic techniques, suitable for the nature of the data gathered and study’s research aims.

#### ***Quantitative data***

The quantitative data were cleaned for entry errors, and analysed using SPSS statistical software. Individual variables were first explored through univariate descriptive statistics included frequencies (for categorical variables) and averages (for scale variables). Second, differences in aggregate percentages between clients starting (T1) and exiting the programme (T2) were explored using non-parametric tests (including binomial tests). Third, association between variables (‘cause and effect’) was explored through bivariate analysis (including chi-square, and Cramers-v correlations) and multivariate analysis (mainly binary logistic regression). Particular attention was paid to the relationship of variables to whether clients completed the Youthbuild programme.

#### ***Qualitative data***

The analysis of the qualitative data followed a “grounded” approach, that is, all analysis was grounded in the interview data. Although the themes listed in interview schedules informed the analysis of the qualitative data to some extent, we were keen to maintain a sensitivity to the themes and issues that interviewees in each of our three key participant groups identified, rather than focusing on what *we thought* was important prior to conducting interviews. To achieve this, all interview transcripts were examined carefully and coded for themes and issues which interviewees identified as being salient features of Youthbuild for them. Not infrequently this involved the identification of what Sociologists refer to as “in-vivo codes”, that is, descriptive or evaluative categories used by informants themselves as part of their normal way of speaking about Youthbuild, but which appear to point to wider thematic issues, sometimes central to understanding the experience of participation in the project. An example of this might be the notion of “good lad”, which was used by both staff and employers in a rather loose and vernacular fashion but which, when examined more closely, pointed to a set of descriptive and evaluative criteria at the heart of the project. For each of the three participant groups, once themes were identified in any particular interview, other transcripts were then examined for signs of re-occurrence or, alternatively, points of contradiction. Finally, a similar analysis ‘across participants’ was conducted (for example a point of obvious concern for Youthbuild staff was looked for in employer or client interviews, and vice versa). Although respecting the uniqueness of client, staff and employer perspectives and experiences then, points of convergence and divergence

between these three groups was a central concern in the analysis of the qualitative data set.

The findings drawn from the quantitative data are presented in chapters 6 and 7. Each of these chapters contains a series of graphs, charts and tables, supported by reference to relevant statistical tests and measures. Where relevant, qualitative data is drawn upon to illustrate or amplify particular points brought out in the analysis. A narrative thread will be used to link the data together and develop the picture of Youthbuild to emerge from the analysis of the quantitative data. For the qualitative data the main method of presentation is textual and discursive. Chapters 4 and 5 contain presentation of findings and discussion thereof based largely qualitative data. These chapters draw heavily not only on the themes and issues raised in interviews, but also include verbatim comments taken from interview transcripts. However, as noted above, the presentation is not simply descriptive. As with the quantitative data, these data have been carefully analysed for how they allow us to achieve the aims set out in the previous chapter, and more generally, for how they help us and the reader to appreciate the range of perspectives central to Salford Youthbuild.

For both quantitative and qualitative data, an emphasis has been placed on linking the findings to practice. In that sense, although the methods used are similar to those used in academic research, the report concerns itself primarily with evaluation of the project and suggestion for how future similar projects might be run.

## **Summary**

Drawing on a range of primary and secondary data sources, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, and conducting statistical and thematic analyses, the research design has allowed us to develop a deep, rich and multi-dimensional picture of Youthbuild. The research design incorporates the experiences and perspectives of the project's key participants and includes a longitudinal element to assess impact, change and allow for sensitivity to emergent issues. The following chapters will present findings based on these data and analyses, culminating in our conclusion and recommendations in chapter 8.

### 3 Who were the young people?

This chapter examines the characteristics of the young people involved with Youthbuild Salford over the year in which it operated. It asks what kind of young people were referred to and recruited by the project, and explores their features, needs and expectations at the start of their involvement. The evaluation looked in detail at various aspects of the young people's background and lives, including: their basic demographics; their family and living arrangements; their social care background; their previous education, training and employment; their attitudes to work; their offending behaviour; and their lifestyle and health. In addition, the evaluation considered the client's self-perceived needs and their expectations of the project at this stage. The chapter concludes by trying to build up a picture of a 'typical Youthbuild client'.

#### Numbers and referrals

In total, 26 young people took part in the Youthbuild Salford project during the year from April 2008 to March 2009. These were split into two cohorts: the first cohort had 12 young people; with 14 young people in the second cohort.

About three-quarters of the young people on the project (19/26) had been referred by the local Youth Offending Service. Of the six remaining clients, five had been referred by the Next Steps agency, and one was a self-referral. This last case was an older young person (25 years old), who was taken on as part of negotiating a work partnership. When asked how they found out about Youthbuild, three of the YOT referrals commented that they had heard through the local Connexions service, and six specified that they had heard about it from the YOT careers officer.

In general, the clients presented a picture of being very positive on hearing of Youthbuild when these referrers mentioned the project to them. They were aware that it presented a positive opportunity for them, when there were few employment and training opportunities available for them. As the following selection of quotations from the lads illustrates, it gave them a chance when some believed that gainful employment was already "game over" for these young people:

*"The Youth Offending team put me on to a careers worker, and they got me to come in to this. At the time, I thought that it was perfect for me. I was disqualified from driving, so I wasn't getting anywhere. I thought it was game over." (Client 1)*

*"My connexions worker mentioned it, it sounded good, so I thought – let's go for it" (Client 2)*

*"Connexions first told me about it. I thought it was good, getting your CSCS card and learning tools and that." (Client 3)*



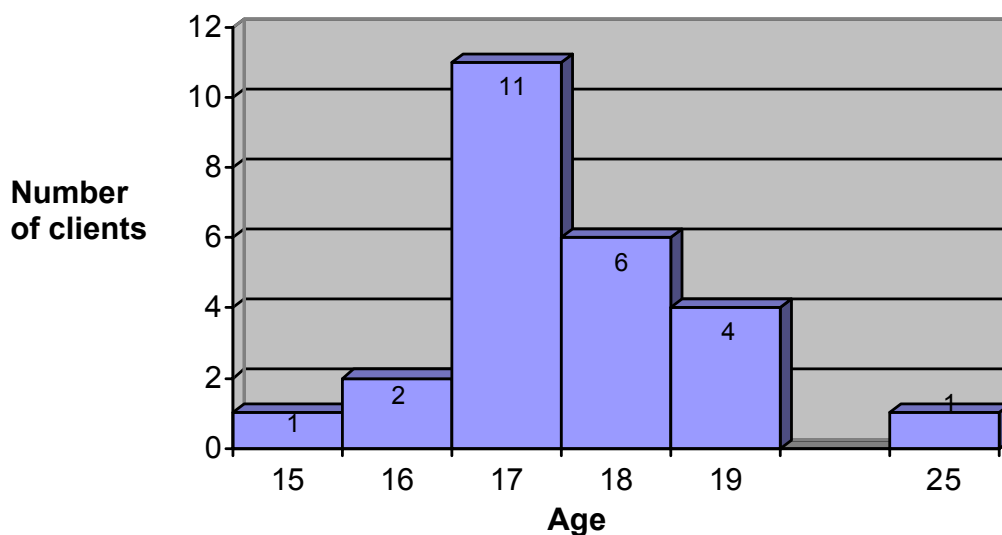
*"It was when I was doing my ISSP, and looking through the job books. The connexions woman knew that I was looking for work so sent me along straight away. I snapped it up; it was perfect for what I wanted. It had everything that I wanted."* (Client 4)

## **Young people - characteristics**

### **Age and sex**

All Youthbuild clients were male. The median average age of the young people joining Youthbuild was 17 years old. This was also the most common age, although it only accounted for just under half of clients (11/25). However, the bulk of the trainees were within the age range of 17 to 19 years old (21/25). There were a handful below this age, at 15 and 16 years old, but only one client in his twenties – an outlier at 25 years old (the rather atypical self-referral).

**Graph 3.1: Age of clients on joining Youthbuild**



Base: 25; 1 missing

### **Family and Living arrangements**

#### ***Housing arrangements***

The most common housing situation for the clients coming into the project was to be living at home with members of their family. Almost three-quarters of the young people (19/25) were living with their mother, father or both; and a further two clients lived with other members of their family. We did not distinguish between biological and foster families at this point (see below). Two other clients were living away from their familial home with their partners. It is worth noting that out of the remaining three

trainees for whom housing data exist, one commented that he was living in an institution – it is understood that he was living in a hostel.

**Table 3.1: Living arrangements of young people**

Who young person lived with at start of involvement	Frequency	Percent
Parents	19	72%
Other family	2	8%
Partner	2	8%
Institution	1	4%
Other	2	8%

Base: 25; 1 missing

Although these housing arrangements suggested at least some degree of housing stability for the majority of young people on the project, this did not mean that their living arrangements were unproblematic. Youthbuild staff considered that, at the beginning of their involvement, three in five clients (15/25) had serious problems with their living arrangements. These included having contact with family members involved with crime, family that did not show an interest in them, tension and rows with their parents, and witnessing rows or violence between others in the family. Indeed, almost half of clients (12/25) were thought to have difficulties at home that would specifically increase the risks of failing in employment, of which the majority (7) had difficulties that would make holding down a job “very much harder”. Against this, however, it is worth noting that for a minority of clients (5/25), the staff considered that the stability at home may be strong enough to act as a protective factor for employment and be supportive enough to actually make working easier.

Furthermore, the stresses on employment of problems inside the home felt by the majority were consistently exacerbated by the local area in which the young people lived. All of the young people involved with the project had at least one problem in their neighbourhood that might be considered to increase the risk of both offending and failing in employment. These included drug dealing in the neighbourhood, a lack of facilities for young people and community amenities, racial tension and particular opportunities to sell stolen goods. Indeed, according to Youthbuild staff, the majority of these young people (14/25) had their employment chances worsened by living in that area – with one in five (5/25) finding it would make working “very much harder”.

### ***Social care background***

Although the minority of the young people had been looked after by the Local Authority in the past (6/25), this proportion of almost one in four is still much higher than in the general population. Moreover, not being taken into care did not mean involvement with the social care system; the large majority of those involved with Youthbuild had had contact with social services in the past (22/25). Of course, the widespread experience of

(the need for) social care for these young people is consistent with being at risk of offending, which was one of the criteria for inclusion on the project.

**Table 3.2: Social care background**

	Frequency	Percent
Ever been in care	6	24%
Ever contact with social services	22	88%

Base: 25; 1 missing

### ***Family support***

It was clear that the area of family relationships and support was still problematic for a large proportion of the young people. A substantial minority of young people (11/25) themselves reported to us that they were having at least some difficulties with how they were getting on with others. Moreover, the great majority of clients (21/25; 84%) were considered by Youthbuild staff to have at least one problem with relationships. These included tension with their childhood family, rows with a partner, witnessing fighting within the family, or someone within the family causing problems for the young person because of drink or drug use. Two problems are worth noting which may have particular bearing on how well they are able to meet the aims of the project: Firstly, for almost half of the young people (10/25), it was considered that overall their family either do not communicate with them or show no interest in them – consequently, it is unlikely that they would receive any family support for either their involvement in Youthbuild or employment in general. Secondly, about half of the young people (12/25) were entering the project while still in contact with family members or close adults who were involved in crime – increasing the risk of their failing the ‘preventing offending’ aim of Youthbuild.

Overall, then, it is not surprising that for about three quarters of the young people entering Youthbuild (18/25) staff considered that their personal and family relationships would make it harder for them to succeed in the project and in employment. Only four clients were felt to have supportive relationships that would actually make it easier to succeed. The staff concern was supported, at least in part, by the young people’s own analysis. About half (12/25) considered that there were at least some difficulties in life at home.

There was, however, one factor that could give hope for some support for the young people, whether or not this come directly from their family. Although only half of the young people report some difficulty with the amount of support they receive in general (12/24), Youthbuild staff considered that the large majority of clients (20/24; 83%) had at least one adult supportive of their involvement with the project.

### Education, training and employment background

As might be expected in a programme designed to help people's employment prospects, the young people involved had a very poor record in education, training and employment (ETE). Firstly, for the majority of the young people, involvement in ETE had not been part of their life immediately before entering the project; only two had been involved in the last month. The majority of the young people had been out of involvement with ETE for at least four months (19/26), while for a quarter of trainees that period had been more than a year (6/26).

**Table 3.3: Most recent time young person in ETE**

Last time in any ETE	Frequency	Percent
In last month	2	8%
1-3 months ago	5	19%
4-9 months ago	10	39%
10-12 months ago	3	12%
More than a year ago	6	23%

Base: All (N26)

It was likely, then, that these young people had issues that made involvement with ETE difficult for them. While other areas of this chapter will note indirect risk factors for success in this area (e.g. lack of family support), staff also identified that problems directly related to ETE that affected the large majority of clients (21/25; 84%). These included difficulties with reading and writing, problems with maths, and strained relationships with recent employers. Moreover, project staff considered that for the majority of the young people (14/25), such direct problems with ETE would have a detrimental effect on their likelihood of employment success. For a small number of clients (4/25), these ETE problems were considered make success "very much harder".

### Education and training background

Given the overall figures for ETE, it follows that only the minority of young people would have been in any education or training recently. Indeed, only three of either cohort had been in any education or training in the past three months, and about two thirds of the young people had not experienced any education or training for more than a year (17/26).

**Table 3.4: When young person was last in education or training**

Last time at school or college	Frequency	Percent
In last month	1	4%
1-3 months ago	2	8%
4-9 months ago	2	8%
10-12 months ago	4	15%
More than a year ago	17	65%

Base: All (N26)

Given that only one of the young people was below school leaving age, these figures could be seen as more of a reflection of the lack of continued training development of the young people rather than problems in their basic education. They do not necessarily tell us that the young people had difficulties in their schooling or that there was a pattern of education being cut short. However, there is some evidence both for and against overriding problems in schooling: evidence for difficulties includes the fact that more than half of the young people admitted having been permanently excluded from school or college (14/23; 61%). Despite these difficulties, however, there is evidence that the majority of the clients had achieved something in their education or training: the majority had achieved the level of at least one GCSE (14/25). Nevertheless, a quarter of the young people (7/25) did not hold any qualifications at all, including any trade certificates or AQAs.

### *Work background*

About three quarters of the young people (20/26; 77%) had been employed at least once in their past before joining the project, although as overall figures for ETE showed, this was generally not in the recent past (only three had worked in the last 3 months). Indeed, for about a third of those who had worked, their most recent job was more than 10 months ago.

**Table 3.5: Most recent time young person in Job**

Last time in any ETE	Frequency	Percent
In last month	1	4%
1-3 months ago	3	12%
4-9 months ago	10	40%
10-12 months ago	4	16%
More than a year ago	2	8%
Never	5	20%

Base: All (N26)

Some clients painted a picture of difficulties and frustrations in trying to find a job over a long period of time, exacerbated by lack of qualifications (and lack of appropriate preparation):

*"I was looking through the job books but there was nothing that I could have done, without the qualifications or CVs and things like that. As a young kid, it was hard trying to get a job on your own. People saying, "Just go out and get a job", but you can't just go out and get a job. It's hard to get a job. So Youthbuild's been a revelation to me." (Client 4)*

Youthbuild staff noted that the situation would not have been helped by the fact that many of the young people had previously been involved with the criminal justice system. Many clients, then, were finding themselves in a catch 22 situation where they

were finding themselves at risk of offending because of a lack of employment, and a lack of employment because of their previous offending. It is, of course, precisely this kind of circle that the project was trying to address:

*“Because he’d come through the youth offending team, a lot of people when they read their applications, they don’t consider them because they automatically look and thing, oh, criminal and just push them to one side”. (Staff)*

When they had worked, most of the clients had worked full-time (16/20). Nevertheless, as the table below shows, the amount of money earned in that last job varied greatly. Just less than a third of clients claimed to have earned more than £200 a week, a third between £150 and £200, and just over a third less than £150 a week. Overall, however, the large majority of young people (21/25) stated that they were having at least some difficulty with money at the start of their involvement with Youthbuild.

**Table 3.6: Money earned per week by the young people in their in last job**

Wage	Frequency	Percent of those in job in past
Under £100	4	19%
£100-£149	4	19%
£150-£199	7	33%
£200-£250	5	24%
More than £250	1	5%

Base: 21 All who have had a job in past

Interestingly given the nature of the project, further analysis of this most recent job shows that most of the young people have had an interest and some experience of work in the construction industry. For 13 out of 20 who have worked in the past, their most recent job was in some form of construction, most commonly labouring (n5), but the jobs also included painting, plastering, roofing, joinery, fencing and bricklaying.

**Table 3.7: Most recent job type**

Job type	Frequency
<b>Construction jobs</b>	
Labourer	5
Painting	2
Plastering	2
Roofing	1
Apprentice Joiner	1
Fencing	1
Bricklaying	1
<b>Other jobs</b>	
Call centre	1
Car washing	1

Agency work	1
Landscape gardening	1
Fast food work	1

Base: 18/20 who have worked

The young people were asked specifically about why the last job ended. For almost half (9/20), this was because they were not needed any more – either being made redundant or their contract ending. Perhaps surprisingly, given their employability risk factors, only a quarter of the young people stated that the job ended negatively; i.e. because either they did not like the job (3/20) or the job did not like them (2/20 sacked). It is possible, of course, that other young people did not have their contract extended because things were not working out positively.

**Table 3.8: Reason why the young person's last job ended**

Reason	Frequency	Percent of those in job in past
Left to do Youthbuild	3	15%
Moved away from area	2	10%
Job didn't suit	3	15%
Made redundant / contract ended	9	43%
Sacked	2	10%
Other	1	5%

Base: 20 All who have had a job in past

### Attitudes to work

The young people were also asked on various issues related to work in order to gauge their attitude to employment at the beginning of Youthbuild. Overall, the young people were pretty positive to both their past employment and to work in general. The first table below presents the proportion of young people agreeing with statements in relation to jobs that they have had in the past. The large majority (16/19) of the young people entering the project felt that they had enjoyed their previous work, and three-quarters had liked going to work (16/21). Although the majority (13/19) agreed that they only work for the money, most clients (12/20) agreed that their past work could be really satisfying as well. It should be recognised, however, that there was still a sizeable minority who were not entirely positive about their previous work, including four in ten (8/20) who admitted that they had dreaded getting up in the morning. Interestingly, at the point of entering Youthbuild, almost all of the young people who had worked felt positive about their own ability to be good at the jobs that they do (20/21).

These patterns in attitude were generally continued when looking at attitudes to work in general (not necessarily actual past employment) and included all the young people (not just those who have worked), although slightly less positive in places. About two-thirds

(18/26) felt that work was enjoyable, compared to the 84% who had thought their previous employment was enjoyable. In contrast, however, a higher proportion thought

**Table 3.9: Attitudes to past employment**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Proportion agree</b>	<b>Percent of those in job in past</b>
I've enjoyed the jobs that I've done	16/19	84%
I've dreaded getting up in the morning	8/20	40%
Work has been really satisfying	12/20	60%
I'm good at the jobs I do	20/21	95%
I've only done work for the money	13/19	68%
I've liked going to work	16/21	76%

Base: 20 who have been employed, Missing/'Can't say' varies

that work in general "can be" satisfying (19/25) compared to those who had felt their work had been really satisfying – perhaps suggesting hope for jobs that suited them better than past employment. Again, there was a sizeable minority who were not entirely positive about work, including a quarter of the young people who felt that work was boring (6/23).

It is interesting to note that, as when focusing on past employment, the young people expressed confidence in their own ability to work well. Despite the fairly poor background in ETE (above), the large majority (22/25) felt that they already had the skills for work on entering Youthbuild. Focusing a little more on the issue of work skills, however, shows that the picture is not quite so black and white – on a sliding scale of possible responses, the majority of the young people (18/25) noted that they had at least *some* difficulties with having the right skills for employment.

**Table 3.10: Attitudes to work in general**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Proportion agree</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Work is boring	6/23	26%
Work is enjoyable	18/26	69%
I've tended to avoid work	3/24	13%
I've really tried to get work	19/23	83%
I've the skills for work	22/25	88%
Work can be satisfying	19/25	76%

Base: All, Missing/'Can't say' varies

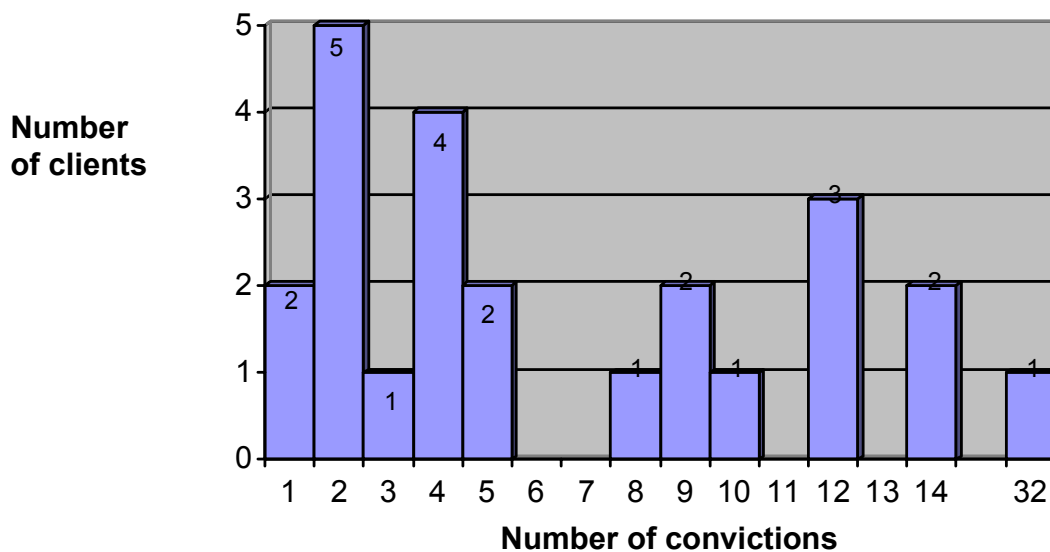


## Offending behaviour

### *Previous convictions*

All the young people involved in Youthbuild have been in trouble with the police, making this the most unifying defining feature across both cohorts (apart from sex). It was possible to analyse data on previous convictions for 24 out of the 26 trainees, which show a group with a varied but generally established criminal record. The mean average number of separate conviction dates (times in court for sentencing) across the two cohorts was about four per person (3.92), and they had an average of 7.2 convictions each. This suggests a level of persistency in offending as a characteristic of the group. However, the median average is slightly lower at three separate sentencing dates and 4.5 convictions, which indicates that a small proportion of the group were committing more offences than others and bringing the group average up (that would be expected in any group). Indeed, the number of separate sentencing dates ranged from 1 to 14, and convictions ranged from 1 to 32. The graph below shows that there is one 'outlier' with 32 convictions, and the other 23 young people had between 1 and 14 convictions. Within that range, there were two main clusters: the bulk of the group who had less than 5 convictions, and a smaller more persistent group with more than 8 convictions.

*Graph 3.2: Number of convictions for each young person*

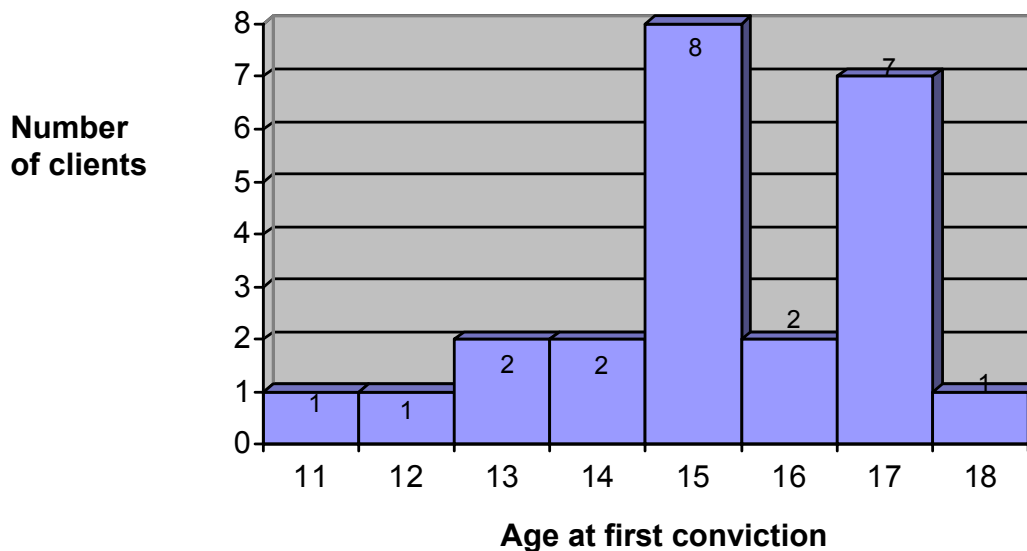


Base: All (24); 2 missing

The average age of first conviction was about 15 years old (mean = 15.25; median = 15), although of course this is not necessarily the age at which they first started offending. The graph below shows that the bulk of young people (17/24) were first convicted between 15 and 17 years of age, while a handful (6/24) were first convicted before their fifteenth birthday (1 as young as 11). Given that (a) most Youthbuild clients were between 17 and 19 years of age when they started on the project, (b) that most were first convicted after their fifteenth birthday, and (c) that they had to fit in an average of four court dates each, it is unsurprisingly that appearing in a criminal court was very much a

recent feature of these young people's lives. Just less than half of the Youthbuild clients (10/24; 42%) had been most recently convicted less than six months prior to starting on the project. This figure went up to almost two-thirds (15/24; 63%) being convicted within the last year.

*Graph 3.3: Age at first conviction*



Base: All (24); 2 missing

Furthermore, three-quarters (19/25) of clients were still on a court Order when beginning their involvement with the project, perhaps reflecting the referral route through the local Youth Offending Service for the majority. A closer look at the disposals being served shows a fairly high level on the tariff scale for a substantial proportion of the young people, including 3 finishing custodial sentences and 5 intensive programmes. There were, however, a contrasting group of 5 clients who were serving a lower level Referral Order.

*Table 3.11: Young people's disposals at the start of involvement*

Disposal	Frequency	Percent
Supervision Order	5	19%
ISSP	5	19%
Referral Order	5	19%
DTO	3	12%
Action Plan Order	1	4%
None	6	23%

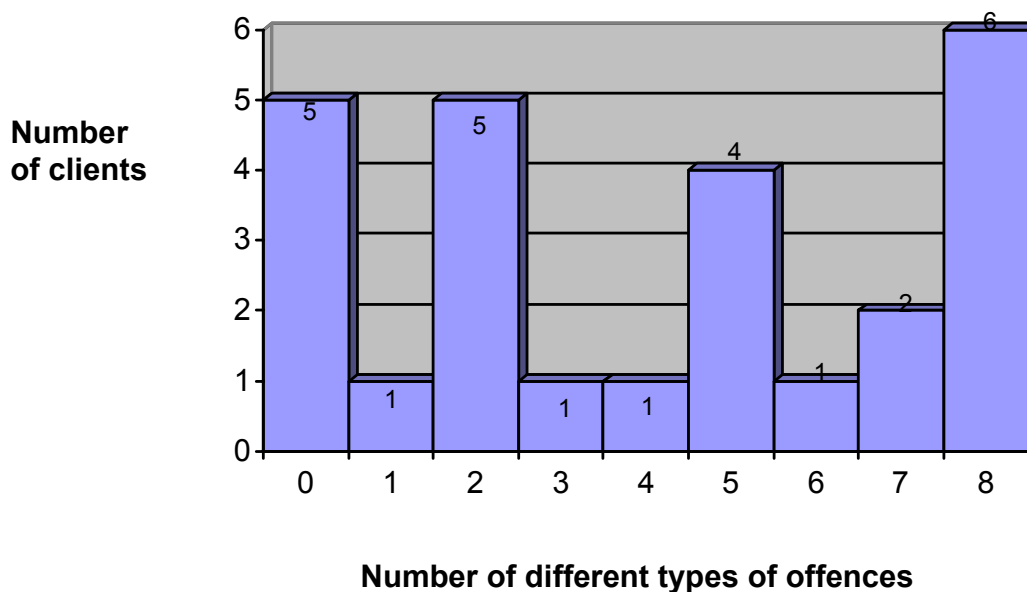
Base: All

The young people provided (confidentially) more up-to-date information on more current offending patterns, during a four week period at the time they joined Youthbuild. Using an adapted version of a Home Office used scale (Graham and

Bowling, 1995), the young people told us about the frequency of a range of offences. The group as a whole accounted for 133 offences over four weeks (albeit a different period for each cohort), with a mean average of five offences a week for each person (mean = 20.85 over four weeks). However, some offenders were particularly prolific, with 8 young people claiming to have committed more than 25 offences each. Consequently, perhaps a clearer reflection of the group as a whole would be the median average of 11 offences over the four week period. Of course, this still shows a clear offending lifestyle. It should be noted however, that this was not the case for all young people in the group – five young people claimed not to have offended at all. If these young people are not included, the median average number of offences for those involved in crime at the time of joining Youthbuild rises to 14 (mean = 25.81).

Interestingly, analysis of the types of offences (see graph below) shows that the young people were fairly generic offenders rather than offence-type specific, suggesting a wider criminal lifestyle. Indeed, a third of offenders (9/26) had committed six or more different types of offences over that period.

**Graph 3.4: Number of offences for each young person**



Base: All (26)

The table below shows the number clients committing each type of offence. The most widespread offence (in terms of number of different offenders) was buying drugs for own use (19/26), followed by getting into a fight in public (16/26). These were the only two offences to be committed by the majority of the young people in the four week period when they joined Youthbuild. However, more than a third of the young people for each offence type had also stolen something (11/26), driven a vehicle when not meant to (11/26), carried a weapon (10/26), sold drugs (10/26), and beaten up or hurt someone (12/26). The most prolific offence type was also buying drugs, which was done a mean average of eight times across the group (8.04). The next offences

committed most often was driven when not meant to (mean = 3.31), followed by selling drugs (mean = 1.88) and getting into a fight in public (mean=1.85).

**Table 3.12: Offending/ antisocial behaviour in past 4 weeks**

Statement	Number of clients	Percent of clients	Mean occurrences across group	Mean within offenders
Stolen something	11	42	0.96	2.27
Driven when not meant to	11	42	3.31	7.82
Damaged or destroyed something	6	23	0.50	2.17
Carried a weapon	10	38	1.19	3.10
Got into a fight in public	16	62	1.85	3.00
Bought drugs for own use	19	73	8.04	11.17
Sold drugs to someone	10	38	1.88	4.90
Set fire to anything on purpose	1	4	0.04	-
Beat up or hurt someone	12	46	1.00	2.17
Threatened someone in order to get something	4	15	0.23	1.50
Something else	6	23	0.27	1.17

Base: All (26)

The frequency of getting into a fight in public highlights the violent nature of offences for the majority of young people in the group (including carried a weapon and beat someone up). The mean average of violent offences across the group was 3.80 over the period (median = 2.5). Aggregated, two-thirds of the young people (17/26) admitted to the different types of violent offences, and among this group the mean average number of offences was 5.82 (median = 5). It is clear that although a small number of the group claimed not to be involved in offending around the time of joining Youthbuild, the majority were committing a large number and wide variety of offences, and a substantial proportion of which were violent. It is unsurprising then that about three-quarters of group (18/25; 72%) noted that they had difficulty in keeping out of trouble with the police. The young people's qualitative descriptions of their activities reflected the figures above – often referring to being in trouble for drugs offences, supplemented by being in trouble for other reasons:

*"A month before Youthbuild, I was in trouble with the police for cannabis. I got a Final Warning." (Client 5)*

*"I got into this through community service. That was through getting caught on the street with a joint." (Client 6)*

*"I've been done for a few drunk and disorderlies, and got community service. Last time I got arrested was last May for drink driving." (Client 7)*

In summary, as the following client summarised succinctly, the evidence suggested that various background risk factors had contributed to a picture of young people who were going, or had gone “off the rails” in relation to criminal activity:

*"At that time, I was going off the rails. I've had a bit of a fucked up family, if I can put it that way. That's when the fight happened, at that time." (Client 4)*

The following section demonstrates that “going off the rails” would also be a fair reflection for other aspects of their life.

## Coping with life

### *Self-esteem*

As suggested by positive views of their own work ability, the young people did not demonstrate problems with self-esteem when answering questions about themselves confidentially. In fact, all of the young people considered that they were “of worth”, and that they do things as well as other people (both 25/25). Similarly, almost all felt that they had good qualities (24/25), had a positive attitude towards themselves (23/25), and were satisfied with themselves (23/25). Conversely, only one young person thought that they were a failure. Some of this high self-esteem at this time may be put down to just being accepted onto the programme. As one young person put it:

*"I felt good. I thought that I was going to get a job. I was feeling positive." (Client 5)*

There were, however, some areas where a substantial proportion of the young people showed signs of self-doubt – which largely seemed to be about their lack of past achievement, status, or positive roles. In particular, about a quarter felt that they did not have much to be proud of (6/25), the same proportion felt that they were no good (6/25), half felt useless at times (12/25), and the majority felt that they did not respect themselves enough (14/25).

**Table 3.13: Statements of self-esteem**

Statement	Proportion agree	Percent
I'm a person of worth	25/25	100%
I've a number of good qualities	24/25	96%
I'm inclined to think I'm a failure	1/25	4%
I'm able to do things as well as most other people	25/25	100%
I feel I do not have much to be proud of	6/25	24%
I take a positive attitude toward myself	23/25	92%
On the whole, I'm satisfied with myself	23/25	92%
I wish I could have more respect for myself	14/25	56%
I feel useless at times	12/25	48%
At times, I think I am no good at all	6/25	24%

Base: 25/26, 1 missing

Self-doubt in relation to lack of status was also a clear feature of the young people for the Youthbuild staff. In particular, staff mentioned negative labelling and the clients feeling that they were criminal or useless. The following comments were recounted by staff, attributed to individual lads:

“You don’t understand *it’s inbred in me, I am, I am a criminal*. Once a criminal, always a criminal”

“*I’m a scrote*. Somebody who takes JSA, does drugs, doesn’t want to work, that’s a scrote”

One further issue pointed to lower confidence than this self-esteem may suggest – looking towards the future. Despite just being accepted onto the Youthbuild programme, the majority of young people (16/25) felt that they were having at least some difficulties in their life that would affect their future prospects.

### ***Lifestyle***

Immediately prior to starting Youthbuild, the young people were leading fairly unstructured and chaotic lives that would be unlikely to sustain employment. Given the lack of ETE (see above), the young people would have had substantial spare time but, according to Youthbuild staff, about half of the group did not do much in their spare time (13/25). Instead, almost all of the young people (23/25) had offending peers that they may hang around with. In addition, the large majority (22/25) stayed out late at night and most had trouble getting up in the morning (14/25). Indeed, Youthbuild staff considered that almost all of the clients (21/25) had lifestyles that would make it harder for them to succeed in employment, with one in five (5/25) making it “very much harder”. Only two clients were rated as having lifestyles that would actually help employability.

### ***Health***

It was clear that having health problems was a dominant characteristic of the young people involved with Youthbuild. In fact, in individual assessments, Youthbuild staff rated every one of their clients as having at least one health problem. These included long term physical conditions, mental health issues (stress, depression, grief, self-harm etc), poor diet and binge drinking. Furthermore, the large majority of young people (18/24) were considered to have health problems that would make it harder to succeed in employment.

The majority of the young people (16/25) concurred that they had at least some difficulty with their health. Specifically, 15 young people cited some degree of difficulty with their physical health, and 13 of the young people suggested some difficulty in emotional health.

### *Substance misuse*

Allied to health problems, the large majority of young people may also have had issues related to substance misuse at the time they joined Youthbuild. Staff members estimated that all but three of the young people (21/24) whom they provided assessments for had at least one area of difficulty related to substance misuse. These areas included seeing substance misuse as essential to their life, having misuse affect their relationships or general functioning, or that substance misuse is making it harder to avoid getting into trouble. In addition, for almost all young people (22/23), their use and misuse of substances at the time of Youthbuild was considered to make it harder for them to succeed in employment; and to be so bad as to make it “very much harder” for more than a third (9/23).

The young people’s rating of their difficulties with alcohol and drugs misuse were rather lower, with neither area rated as causing any difficulties at all for the majority of young people – although it was still a substantial majority admitting some problems. Ten young people (/25) admitted at least some degree of difficulty with alcohol problems, and twelve (/25) felt that drugs may be causing them some problems.

### **Young people’s self-perceived needs and expectations**

The preceding sections have indicated that the young people involved in Youthbuild had various difficulties, needs and risk factors for employment and offending at the time when they joined the project. It is interesting to note that when asked in an open question about what aspects of their lives they would most like to change, the answers from the group reflected this variety of difficulties – relating to employment, offending, education, background, self esteem and health. Relevant to Youthbuild, the most common category of answers were reasons related to employment – getting a job that they like, and learning a trade (10/22 in total).

***Table 3.14: Most preferred change in life***

<b>Change</b>	<b>Proportion agree</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Job that I like	7/22	32%
Learn a trade	3/22	14%
Not get into trouble with police	2/22	9%
More education	3/22	14%
The past	3/22	14%
My status	1/22	5%
Stop smoking	1/22	5%

Base: 22, 4 missing

Furthermore, it is clear that the young people at the start of their involvement were hopeful expectant that Youthbuild would help them to address their concerns and bring about these most important changes in their lives. There was a very positive and

expectant attitude towards their involvement at this time, which linked in with their high self-esteem at the time (above). In an open question about how they were feeling about taking part, two-thirds of clients described themselves as looking forward to taking part (17/21), with a further three stating that they were excited by the prospect. And what they were looking forward to the most from Youthbuild exactly matched the aspects of their life that they wanted to change the most – finding a good job (15/21) and learning a trade (5/21). They saw Youthbuild as a potential answer to their problems.

**Table 3.15: Aspect of Youthbuild most looking forward to**

<b>Benefit from Youthbuild</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Finding employment / good job	15	71%
Learning new skills / trade	5	24%
Meeting new people	1	5%

Base: 21, 5 missing

*“I wanted a new job, back into work. When I got into work, I couldn’t have been happier, but with this recession going on, it’s hard isn’t it? Trying to find any job is.” (Client 1)*

Moreover, at this stage, the young people had a very high expectation that the project would succeed in helping them make these changes in their lives. Almost all of the young people felt that the project would be helpful to them overall (24/25), with the large majority (21/25) expecting the project to be “very helpful”. Focusing specifically on their employment and construction skills needs highlighted above, a similar number considered that the project would be helpful (22/25), although fewer were sure about just how helpful in this area. The project was also anticipated by the large majority to help in wider areas, including learning to organize their time, gaining confidence and dealing with problems in life.

**Table 3.16: Expectations of Youthbuild helpfulness**

<b>Area of help</b>	<b>Very helpful</b>	<b>Fairly helpful</b>	<b>Percent helpful</b>
How helpful overall	21	3	96%
Learning to organise my time	13	9	92%
Learning construction skills	17	5	96%
Dealing with problems in life	8	10	78%
Gaining confidence	12	8	91%

Base: 25, 1 missing



## Summary

It is clear from this examination that the young people involved in Youthbuild had high levels of difficulties in their backgrounds and lives at the time of joining the project. In each of the areas looked at, from family and housing arrangements through to health, the majority of the clients showed high levels of problems and associated needs. In particular, this group as a whole had a very well established history and current pattern of offending, and a very poor track-record in ETE. Of course, these are the specific areas and reasons that the young people were referred to the project. However, *all* of the areas looked at, and associated difficulties and needs, presented specific risks for both re-offending and employment. It is clear that the project would have to overcome, cope with, or at least work despite multiple and deep barriers if it was going to make progress with these young people in accordance with its aims. Moreover, the clients expectations of the project being able to do this were very high.

To summarise this picture, the 'profile' and background story of our typical Youthbuild Salford client, say 'Bob', is described through an homunculus in the box below:

- Male
- White
- About 17 years old
- Lives with a parent, but having problems with their living arrangements
- Lives in a neighbourhood that increases risk of offending
- Was known to social services as a child, and may possibly have been in care (1 in 4 chance)
- Has problems with family or partner relationships
- Has at least one adult supportive of their involvement in Youthbuild
- Been out of any ETE for at least four months, very possibly longer than a year
- Had problems, such as bad experiences, that might act as barriers to ETE
- Has not had any education or training for more than a year
- Probably been permanently excluded from a school or college in the past
- Probably, although not certainly, has some form of qualification (maybe a GCSE)
- Has been employed full-time at least once in the past, but not in the recent past
- May well have worked in the construction industry at some point, possibly some labouring
- Probably left last job because told they weren't needed any more, rather than a specific confrontation
- Has a pretty positive attitude towards work, even if not found past work satisfying
- Is confident in his own work abilities and skills, but recognises that there may be some problems
- Is having some money difficulties
- Has an established criminal record and probably a persistent offender, sentenced 3-4 times
- Probably has about 4 or 5 separate convictions, but may be one of a smaller group with more than 8
- Was first convicted in the last couple of years, and last convicted within the past year
- Is still on a Court Order, very possibly a high tariff one
- Is still offending - probably about three times a week - and more than one type of offence
- Is buying drugs for his own use (several times) and also committing violent offences
- Feels pretty positive about himself, but had some doubts about his past achievements and future status
- Has an unstructured lifestyle, hanging around with offending mates, staying out and getting up late
- Has health problems, including physical health
- Has substance misuse problems, although doesn't think that it affects him as much as others think
- Is looking forward to Youthbuild
- Is highly expectant of the Projects ability to be helpful in lots of ways, most importantly finding him a job

## 4 Implementing Youthbuild – Set-up and the training period

*“We know [the young people] can do it; they just need to tweak a few bits and pieces...I don’t want them to give up, they’re so used to giving up and I want to change that.” (Youthbuild staff member)*

The next two chapters examine the day-to-day running of the Youthbuild project, from its early days in Spring 2008 through to its completion in Spring 2009. The chapters includes commentary on issues such as recruitment and initial experiences of setting up the project, recognising and dealing with the emergent needs of the young people and the demands staff felt this placed on them, Youthbuild staff-employer collaboration, communication and joint management of the placement phase, through final reflection and evaluation. These aspects of the implementation and evolution of the project are treated as intimately interwoven to create the reality of Youthbuild Salford for its key participants. This first implementation chapter deals with the set-up and early days of the project, the training period of a client’s programme before placement, and how staff managed the trainee’s expectations and behaviour during this period. In this and the following chapter, the young people are frequently referred to as ‘the Lads’, a term affectionately used by Youthbuild staff over the course of the interviews.

### Set-up and implementation

#### *Physical environment and conditions*

Before we focus on the way that the intervention programme was implemented, it should be noted that an area that came in for particular criticism in the setting up period was the physical environment in which the project was organised and undertaken. The Youthbuild accommodation was an empty unit on an industrial estate in Salford that had been unoccupied for about a year. For the early period in particular (although relevant throughout to an extent), the impression given by those involved was that the physical environment was certainly inadequate, and possibly unhealthy. A primary complaint was inadequate heating in the building, and that staff and young people struggled to keep warm even with portable heaters. Second, staff criticised inadequate kitchen facilities to ensure a pleasant working environment. Third, there were some health and safety concerns with the state of the building, such as a fire escape that was reportedly “blocked”. Fourth, there appeared also to have been problems with setting up the training area for the lads, along with the practical area where the building training would take place (including apparent delays with PCs and limited space in the training area).

Overall, there was concern expressed that the accommodation was inappropriate for the task of administering and running a training programme for young people. In particular, there was concern for the effect on both staff and clients’ health; the latter of which it has been noted previously was already problematic. For instance, the building

was blamed by staff and some young people for reports of coughs and chest infections that “everyone had” as a result of “dust” in the carpets. As one staff member put it:

*“I mean, I don’t know if you came in the beginning, it was awful, we were all coughing for about three weeks, just because the building hadn’t been used for a year, and the dust and you know it was awful.” (Staff)*

### ***Preparation and organisation***

The start-up arrangements for the project were cited by some Youthbuild staff as having been particularly problematic. While it is usual for interventions to have early implementation problems, comments suggested this period was dominated by more than what they perceived to ‘normal teething problems’. The recruitment and induction stages of the project were referred to consistently as having been rather rushed and somewhat disorganised. It was questioned whether there was enough lead-in time to ensure sufficiently effective implementation from the beginning. Consequently, the initial period was marked by some staff turnover, delayed start dates following recruitment, and the absence of any real formal induction into the project for staff.

There was a sense all round that there had not been enough time given to set-up before the lads arrived. For example, it was felt that there should have been more time to get staff prepared, selecting the right lads, ‘hitting the ground running from day one’, not having to deal with issues as wide ranging as getting new carpets laid (which a staff member’s relative had to apparently do at the weekend) to trying to ensure PCs were available, appearing more organized to the lads themselves, setting early ground rules, and generally having more time and space.

It was also felt by those involved that there were lessons to be learned about the support relationship between large charitable agencies like NCH and satellite projects such as Youthbuild. The main problems encountered in relation to preparation and organisation related to communication, feedback and guidance. Although it should be borne in mind that the reporting of these concerns may well be coloured by the fact that the project had just been ended due to lack of funding, staff clearly felt strongly that support could have been greater and more effective:

*“...often there was nobody to really go through that chain and to actually get back to you...”*

It would appear that this led to some degree of felt insecurity, especially when quick ‘on-the-ground’ unanticipated decisions had to be made, as they often did at the beginning of the project. *“Ultimately, decisions had to be made quickly and we had to make them...”*, one staff member recalled. Although these problems with communication were an ‘always in the background’ element to the project, they were more keenly felt during this more ‘disorganised’ induction period.

The initial disorganisation in set-up seemed to have spilled over into the early stages of the management of the project’s programme itself. As one staff member recalled about

the early weeks of the intervention proper, *"at times, we really didn't know what we were doing"*. As such, this early disorganisation was considered to have impacted on not only staff but also the young people's experience on the first of the two cohorts. Although it should be noted that no mention of delivery disorganisation was mentioned by to the evaluation team by the young people, the effect of early implementation issues on their clients was clearly a concern for the staff:

*"I personally would have liked it more structured, more set up before the beginning. If you know what's going on, the young people know what's going on. When it was a bit disorganized – what're we doing?, when're we leaving? – just constantly all day every day, if we had a timetable they wouldn't be asking that, they'd know what they were doing and I think that demotivated them a bit"*. (Staff)

It should be stressed, however, that any implementation problems appear to be the result of organisational (including administrative) issues rather than the personal qualities and professional competencies of the Youthbuild staff themselves. Staff organisational support was cited as being particularly problematic in the early days of the project. Staff appeared to have felt a little 'at sea' during the early phases of the project and clearly felt more support and clear guidance would have helped both themselves and the lads settle in to the project and have a clearer sense of direction.

Consequently, these early days of the project appeared to be marked by a rather pragmatic and reactive way of working on the part of the staff, rather than an organised or planned approach. However, this would develop and alter into a more sustained reflective practice with experience gained as the project progressed. As one member of staff recalled:

*"[in the beginning] we were making **instinctive decisions** about everything, from ordering supplies to trying to find bricks, to getting contractors."* (our emphasis)

All of the staff cited past professional experience as helping them during these early phases, and over the course of the project in general. Indeed, it appeared that a natural division of labour began over the period of cohort 1, which developed for cohort 2, where each staff member focused on aspects of activity that they had practiced in previous employment, rather than a casework approach, for example, administration and record-keeping for one person; groupwork activities for another; drug counselling for another; and mentoring on issues of homelessness for another etc. That is not to say that these experience and skills were not shared to an extent across the team; an interesting development of this pragmatic approach to early problems on the project was the development of peer-to-peer learning, with each of the members of Youthbuild staff providing valuable advice, support and mentoring in areas that they had some expertise in. The difficulties, perhaps, led to greater team working and determination for the project to succeed.

An valuable comment came from a staff member about the 'type' of person who would be ideally suited to a similar future project. Although framed essentially as a 'person spec', these comments seem to embody some of the key issues that emerged and had to

be dealt with. They also give an idea of the multi-tasking reactive skills needed by the staff as they dealt with these issues:

*"Somebody that's really good at engaging with young people, preferably with some experience of criminal justice.... It's [also] about...having the skills to work on the issues that come out...in partnership with other agencies...being able to work with families as well, doing home visits, ...being used to sitting in someone's house where there's ten people and maybe they're all smoking weed in the back room....not being scared of doing those things. Somebody with group work skills obviously not everybody needs to have that...it doesn't matter as long as the person delivering the main body knows what they're doing. It would be useful having somebody on the project who has a background in construction maybe... What we also noticed was missing and was an admin worker"*

In short, then, the early period and into the time when cohort 1 were being trained and prepared for placement saw the Youthbuild staff respond pragmatically to a range of issues, which developed into a more focused and self-aware reflective practice for the start of cohort 2, and beyond. We will return to this theme of pragmatic and reactive working being turned into reflective learning and more effective practice over the course of the project.

## **Managing the young people**

### ***Expectations and responsibilities***

Although there was no statistical differences in outcomes between the two cohorts of young people who went through the Youthbuild programme (e.g. in completion rates or employment success), there were certain differences of experience for both the staff and the lads themselves. In particular, there appeared to be a qualitative difference in the management of the young people's expectations and behaviour. As might be expected from the preceding section, this essential difference between cohorts 1 and 2 seemed to be about *preparedness* of staff and, in turn, the young people. As one staff member told us:

*"I think we were much better prepared for the second cohort, than we were for the first..."*

This lack of preparedness of the project translated into a lack of preparedness of the young people themselves of both the expectations of them in the initial training period, and when they got out on site. As the same staff member continued:

*"...a lot of them on the first cohort especially, when they went out ...it was a shock to them".*

The positive side of this is that a lot was learnt from problems and mistakes in the early days in order to improve practice as the project went on, and was implemented more effectively by the time of the second cohort. In relation to the preparation of the young people, commented upon above, by the time that the second cohort came to go out on site for their work placements, they were much more prepared for placement in terms of

attitude, behaviour, expectations and suitability. Staff emphasised that they considered that this was due to the reflective practice and learning from the experiences of managing the first cohort. Again, this adaptation highlights the importance of staff ability to analyse, evaluate, and pragmatically respond to their experiences of managing the project and dealing with the lads:

*"...once we've gone through the first cohort, we've worked out what worked well, we can do that again, or maybe that didn't work so well, we can alter that, and do it a different way."*

For example, it was reflected by staff that they had not been in the position to sufficiently impart to the clients in the first cohort what would be expected of them from either themselves or employers – through a lack of time, preparation, organisation and understanding. The better levels of preparedness – having a much better understanding of “what we were doing” – together with learning from cohort 1 would allow staff to more clearly impart to the lads on cohort 2 the nature of the project and the expectations staff had of them, and to do this *from the outset*:

*"We realised that because of the first cohort and some of the things that they were moaning about...that we hadn't really enforced enough on the first cohort what Youthbuild was about...so [we] decided that we were going to be very strict at interview when explaining the demands of the project and what we expected and how the project worked...this time we were much clearer at interview stage, about being late, being docked pay<sup>5</sup> and that we were a different kind of training programme to any other". (Staff)*

Early organizational instability was not only seen as impacting the preparation and planning of everyday activities, but also seen as being intimately tied in with issues of *authority* and control. As one staff member commented about the early days of the project:

*"[If]they think you don't know what you're talking about and they pick up on it straight away and you lose control".*

Indeed, establishing authority was something that staff did express some concerns about over these early stages. There appears to have been no real breakdown of authority as such, but staff did report instances of being told to “*eff off*”, and in one case having mud kicked onto them by a disgruntled lad. However, an awareness of ‘perceived’ organizational instability on the part of the lads, together with actual organizational improvements seemed to give the staff very clear ideas of ground rules, which could be very clearly imparted to the lads in the second cohort. This was seen as important, as there were some staff members who regarded authority as being central to the management of the lads, particularly bearing in mind the chaotic, criminal and violent backgrounds of some of the lads:

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<sup>5</sup> Of no small part in this was the clarification of the placement wage of £72.50 per week during the early part of each client's programme, which had caused some problems in cohort 1 where the lads had felt it “was not right”.

*"With the second group, [we] made them aware from the beginning that you do not get sent out if you do not do as you told, that means behaviour, attitude, coming in here, respecting staff, respecting outside visitors, all of that."* (Staff)

It was also clear from staff interviews that some of the lads tended to see placement as something that they were more *entitled to* rather than *eligible for* (upon successful completion of training). This appeared to have particularly caused problems in cohort 1, as some of the lads appeared to think good behaviour and application to training was something that they were under no real obligation to commit to, whilst they essentially 'waited to go on placement'.

Predicated on these fundamental expectations of behaviour for cohort 2 then was a clear emphasis on the academic element of the training phase (most notably the *CSCS test*, which the lads were required to successfully complete before being allowed on placement). *"You'll be eating, sleeping and drinking the CSCS test"*, one staff recalled telling cohort 2. A further emphasis on cohort 2 then – and something that the staff thought was lacking from cohort 1 – was on the lads knowing they under some obligation to *prove* they were motivated for, aware of, and prepared enough for their placements, so that *"you don't just get a job, you have to earn a job – prove to us that this is what you want to do"* (Staff)

This emphasis on behavioural, training and academic expectations put the lads in cohort 2 a position where they were expected to (and knew they were expected to) 'prove themselves'. In effect, they had to show that they were willing, able and fit for placement. Conversely, the staff were then in a position where they were to justify decisions made about such things as placement allocation and when to reproach lads for bad behaviour, judged against a common set of ground rules. This philosophy of *"...rather than sending them out right away, let them prove that they want that placement"*, as one staff member put it, appeared to have been successful in motivating the lads in cohort 2 to apply themselves to the task of progressing successfully from training to placement.

### ***Appropriate referral and selection***

Another – and perhaps more fundamental – factor pertained to the management of the young people and their behaviour on the programme appeared to be *selection of appropriate young people*. Issues with the management and success of the young people, particularly in cohort 1, were traced back by staff to perceived problems with initial selection and recruitment. In retrospect, some young people were seen as 'not ready' to benefit from the opportunities that Youthbuild gave them, or having issues that would not only make it difficult to succeed in employment (as noted in the previous chapter) but that these would be of the magnitude to prevent engagement:

*"For example, one of my young people on the first cohort, I think the initial problem was that when he came for interview, the extent of his problems weren't apparent, and therefore, he was probably not in a place to do well on this project...until we had sort of, addressed these issues."*

*They only became apparent through me working with him in key work sessions...This young man had massive issues, he was verging on an alcoholic, he hated his son, he was getting arrested nearly every weekend- he really wasn't in a position to go out and start working, he needed so much input before he'd be ready for that."* (Staff)

*"[We were] aware there were a couple of people who were too heavy with issues to be brought on the programme initially, I think [we were] more careful in the second cohort about who [we] accepted onto the programme because they weren't in a position to get through it."* (Staff)

We will see in the next chapter that these observations regarding appropriate selection were supported by our statistical analysis. The initial attitude of the individual young person to work (whether they have tried to avoid work, and whether they only do it for the money) was a significant predictor of whether they went on to complete the project or find education, placement or employment.

This realization that some of the lads in cohort 1 may not have been suitable or 'ready for' Youthbuild – in particular the placement phase of the project (see below) – was however something that – due to time pressure – staff were unable to fully accommodate to in the early days of the project. As one staff member recalled about this period:

*"The first group, [we] felt under so much pressure to get them out that [we] couldn't really mess about with flexibility..."*

The situation would appear to have improved with cohort 2. Not only were the staff able to take more time over the selection of young people to start on the programme, they were more able – helped by collaboration with certain employers – to think more carefully about *when*, *where*, and *if* to send out potentially problematic lads out on placement (see below).

Staff had clear ideas about how 'appropriate' young people could be recruited more effectively in the future:

*"I would say the recruiting of the young people, the right young people, there has to be a certain level of motivation, that young person having a goal and an ambition, wanting to succeed. I think there's been a couple of people who just aren't at that stage yet, and therefore you're almost setting them up to fail, so I think..."*

One staff member had a quite precise idea of how to improve the future lad recruitment and selection process. Again, this seems to have been knowledge and experience gained from the 12 months or so on the project:

*"I would add more questions about construction to find out about their knowledge about the industry. I would put in a questionnaire about the construction industry to each applicant".*

Another suggestion made by one member of staff was to increasing the population from which lads were selected in future projects (e.g. the inclusion of homeless young people



who were not necessarily offenders; this comment was also made by one of the employers).

Organisational issues, consequences of recruitment, time pressure, emergent issues and the need to quickly find placements combined to make the experience of cohort 1 from a staff perspective less than ideal then. However, again, this provided a clear learning experience which allowed staff to *improve practice in the training and placement of cohort 2*. This went, for example, all the way down to keeping more detailed registers of attendance during the training phase and logging all telephone contacts whilst out on placement. In short, a more tightly organised and better managed experience for all concerned.

## **The training period and supporting the young people**

### *Training, and ideas for the future*

The staff worked hard over the training period of each cohort to adequately 'prep' the lads for placement. Through a combination of (a) practical training in the simulated building area of the Youthbuild site, (b) academic work in the PC clusters at the site, and (c) activities designed to improve their interpersonal and communication skills, the lads were tutored in what was required of them once in placement.

In terms of the training activities in the pre-placement phase, staff identified various practices drawn directly from their experience on this project that could improve future similar projects:

*"I would definitely have more on the practical side of things - more fun activities. I know in Scotland [where a previous Youthbuild project had been carried out] they did it as a one off and they took them go carting but actually given the experience of taking them on a trip was good. I think they need something away from what they're doing. Have more structured days in the workshops, maybe have more visits, building sites and what to expect. We did one visit to the Bovis site, which was a massive site, down at Salford Quays. They do get to see it, they do a bit of a talk and then they give them a walk around - I think it would be good to do 'taster days' with someone mentoring them or whatever or taking two of them for a day and showing them what it's all about".*

The concept of 'taster days' was one suggested by employers in separate interviews. Arising out of the recognition that for some lads the building site "*just wasn't for them*", more than one employer suggested that youths should be given the opportunity near to the start of the project to spend some time on-site to provide an initial exposure to the realities of work on-site. The duration of this suggested by employers ranged from a couple of days to a week. This was seen to be a potential way of avoiding the "shock" (see below) that some lads appeared to experience when moving from the training to placement stage of the project.

### *Supporting the young person during the training phase*

However, it soon became clear that the preparation for employment would need to go beyond these formal 'training' activities. As the chapter on the young people showed, it was clear that there were wide issues for the young people impacting on both offending and their employment prospects. These concerns fed into practice and led to a set of contingencies that the four staff on the project found themselves confronted with. These would need to be addressed to an extent. As such, appropriate support for the young people's wider issues was a matter that the staff came to recognise as a growing issue as the project progressed, particularly when taking on a "keyworker" role.

In addition to facilitating training and work placements, the staff took on roles more akin to a social worker, counsellor, Yot worker and careers advisor all rolled into one. These included, in particular, tutoring in and support with managing anger, managing stress, and relaxation techniques. Again, this involved staff drawing on their various extensive knowledge and experience (one staff member for example was very experienced in groupworking to address a range of issues). At times, the burden for staff in dealing with such wide support matters would appear to be considerable. Indeed, often it appears above and beyond the call of duty – one staff member for example recalled taking calls on her mobile phone on a Friday night from a parent "wanting to chat about her son".

However, there were clear instances where staff thought more specialist support was needed and did seek support from external agencies. However, this was problematic. Although there was some praise for the support given by these service providers, there was an obvious thread of concern and even dissatisfaction from staff. This suggested some breakdown in effective partnership working. Particularly problematic was that the other agencies may not give the Youthbuild clients the priority that staff felt they needed. There was concern that this would mean that the young people would miss out on the opportunities that Youthbuild provided when there was insufficient support for a need that was clearly "*affecting [this lads] ability to attend the programme*". For instance, citing one example of a client in need of help with significant alcohol problem, one staff member told us:

*"The drug worker didn't deem his problems as immediate as I thought it needed dealing with ...he was getting arrested every weekend, massive implications from this behaviour and they didn't deem it as urgent or a problem. They said he can come in and see us, I just thought it was a bit poor ...when a young person is telling me that they're drinking nearly two hundred units of alcohol a week...it's not really good enough."*

As the above quotation shows, the staff's obvious commitment to lads' potential, at times caused some frustration among staff members, when they thought additional services were not as easily or quickly forthcoming as they might have been. At worst, there was a suspicion that the agencies had already given up on some of these young people, had effectively drawn a line under them and were glad to see them passed on to another agency or project. As one staff concluded:

*"It's not that people aren't helpful, I think it's that there's an attitude that 'we've worked with so and so before and they've not engaged with us so, we're not doing the work anymore'..."*

Moreover, as the risk factors for the young people often extended beyond their own skills, health and attitudes into their lifestyle or domestic sphere, there was the inevitable concern that these would also need to be addressed in order to facilitate employment success. As such, the staff "keywork" would also extend to trying to help in the domestic realm of the lads, which went way beyond the original remit of the project. This might even involve trying to alleviate family members' problems if it was felt that these were affecting the client's chances: One staff recalled trying to get health support for one lad's partner; it was felt that help with these problems was a prerequisite for the lad to succeed in employment:

*"...so I decided that because we are about doing what we can to get them in to work, we had to support her then...there were all these [health issues] going on, and unless you're involved with a service, nothing happens".*

A health and safety concern to accompany this extension into the lads' domestic sphere to be noted is that it was not unusual then for Youthbuild staff to *expose themselves to some of the some of the potentially negative conditions experienced by the lads themselves*. Of course, this also went for the environment and context of the placement site itself.

## **Summary**

It is clear from interviews with staff that, at least in the early stages of the project, they had a range of concerns about the project. From the referral and selection of the lads, as well their own recruitment and guidance on and into the project, through settling into the physicality of the Youthbuild base, establishing lines of communication with higher management and external agencies, to training and supporting the lads for placement, staff had plenty to say about their experience of Youthbuild. A dominant theme to emerge has been the pragmatic responses and reflective practice that staff appeared to be constantly engaged in. To that extent, the dynamism of dealing with the project at a staff and managerial level has been revealed.

The following chapter will draw further on staff interviews but also introduce employer experiences to explore the management and support of the young people in the placement phases of the project.

## 5 Implementing Youthbuild – The trial and full-pay periods

This second implementation chapter focuses on the period of the Youthbuild programme spent placed with an employer in the construction industry. Following their initial training period of classroom training in Youthbuild premises, the young people would spend a short 'trial' period of time with the employer, still on lower wages; before a final period of contracted employment on full-wages for the job (half paid by Youthbuild and half by the employer). Obviously, this period brought an entirely different set of issues for the project and its staff, dealing with remote support arrangements for the young people. This chapter deals first with issues surrounding the relationship between the project and the employers, before looking in some depth at the young people's transition to the construction site.

### The project-employer relationship

#### *Arrangement of placements and employer support*

The identification and allocation of appropriate placements was necessarily a collaborative activity between Youthbuild staff and placement employers. Indeed, the success of the project depended to a large extent on effective partnership with, and accommodation by, placement employers. Fortunately, staff would be able to find suitable positions for all of the lads who stayed the course of the training and were suitable for progression to placement.

Overall, there was a lot of support for the aims and intentions of the project from the employers who were 'recruited' by the staff. Although some initially showed a degree of reluctance (see below), once 'on board' the consensus among employers appeared to be that Youthbuild was "a good idea" (due in no small part to some of the positive work from some of the lads). The typical support for both the concept and the reality of the project was summed up succinctly by one employer:

*"I think it's a great idea, what they're doing' with the lads."*

Employers seemed to become genuinely enthused about the rationale underlying and philosophy behind the project, and supportive of what it was trying to achieve. Specifically, the provision of opportunity to enter *legitimate career structures* by "giving the lads a chance" that they would "not normally have" seemed to be generally recognised by employers as a good thing. "These kids need our help", one employer proclaimed. Although the link between such opportunity structures and protective factors against criminal activity was not explicitly drawn out by employers, there appeared to be a tacit awareness that entering into legitimate career pathways was inversely correlated with criminal and delinquent activity.

Employers almost without exception thought the project had benefited the lads, and expressed some regret that it couldn't have continued. Again, there seemed to be a symbiotic aspect to these relationships when they did develop in that employers felt the benefits of providing support for the lads – “it's made *me* feel good” one employer told us, no-one else gave him a chance but *I have*”.

However, the initial activity of getting employers 'on board' and helping in the identification of suitable placements for the lads was not wholly unproblematic. Indeed, some employers were initially very “*reluctant to get involved*”, and the Youthbuild staff had to engage in a challenging process of persuasion through negotiation. Staff felt that they were, in effect, 'pitching' something new to employers. In retrospect, this was considered no easy task:

*“You're selling something, in essence to them, you're selling them something that a big part of society doesn't want a part in, so it's not, you're not selling benevolence, you're taking up their time, so that was a challenge for me.” (Staff)*

Difficulties in finding and then negotiating with potential employers caused delays in placing some young people. This was considered by staff, and the young people, to be a considerable problem with the project for two reasons. First, it failed to live up to the young people's expectations that they would go straight into employment after the training phase. Second, and related, it meant that the young people would have to wait longer for an increase in their income. The feared consequence was that any positive changes made to the young person's lifestyle and attitudes etc by the training phase would be undone by this delay. One staff member recalled discussing this with her colleagues at the time, saying:

*“They won't be getting any money until they're on placement, but it's not their fault they're not going on placement. So what they going to do now? They'll be back out offending, because they need money and they've got none and it'll be three weeks on their JSA coming through.”*

### ***The good and bad worker from the employers' perspective***

Once in placement, it appeared that employers were quick to identify “good kids”. Such individuals were characterised in quite similar ways across sites and across employers interviewed. As far as the employers were concerned, “good kids” were those who displayed a range of characteristics that made them “good workers”, but more specifically these included:

- reliable
- punctual
- respectful of on-site authority; and
- eager to learn<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Although, it was mentioned that the young people could be *too* “eager to learn”. One employer recalled that one of his Youthbuild lads, in his eagerness to progress, was pressurising him to be allowed to do work that he was not properly trained for.

The presence of such good kids on site appears to have in itself justified participation in the project for several employers. Asked about the positive aspects of involvement with Youthbuild, employers invariably cited these individuals, who seemed to personify Youthbuild at its best and epitomize what employers thought such a project should be about. The lads who applied themselves to the training and placement to all extent and purposes functioned in an ambassadorial role for the project, or at least personified its rationale, aims and objectives. There was an obvious recognition on the part of employers of these lads: - *"we want a hundred of Tim"*, one employer remarked.

In contrast, there was evidence that employers thought that some of the Youthbuild lads were not particularly suitable or appropriate for work on-site, or building work in general. The main reasons cited for this included:

- perceived general immaturity
- being "crafty" or "swinging a leg" (exploiting the opportunity with no real dedication to the Project or intention of continuing)
- impatience and a lack of appreciation of the concept of (legitimate) 'career' (i.e., "wanting everything now" without building up a career)
- a poor attitude to life in general (in a non-specific way)

These experiences resulted in some employers describing their lads (when they had more than one on site) as a "mixed bag". Fortunately, within the employers' experience of a "mixed bag", negative cases (when they did occur) did *not* seem to negatively colour the overall experience of participation in Youthbuild for employers (i.e. they seemed to be perceived by employers to be exceptions to the rule of generally 'good kids').

There are two features of these lists that are important to note for the rest of this report. First, the employers did not really focus on construction skills or other technical expertise in their assessments. Instead, the kids were characterised and judged in terms of their attitudes and life skills; particularly focusing on attitudes to authority and respect for their situation and the job. Second, the issue of immaturity was a concept that dominated the placement, and will be explored further in the sections that follow.

### ***Communication with employers and concerns about exploitation***

Once in placement, communication between Youthbuild staff and employers seemed in itself to be relatively unproblematic. However, there were occasions when employers appeared to be less responsive and more guarded with information such as impressions gained of the lads, or whether or not they planned to keep lads on or 'let them go'. As one staff recalled:

*"...some of them we used to phone up every week and they'd go "yeah, everything's fine", then all of a sudden you'd get an e-mail with a list of things".*

Youthbuild staff ultimately had the well-being of the lads at heart, and so were keen to monitor the lads on site and give support if and when needed. This led to keyworkers ensuring they maintained a close eye on their assigned lads in placement. As placements progressed, they adopted a cautious, and what might be perceived as sometimes sceptical, stance to certain employers. This was partly based in the fear that some of the lads may be exploited or abused in some way. As one staff member put it:

*"It's about being aware of the political issues on site and management issues. I just had this one company, but a month ago I saw all the warning signs when they started going "oh he's late" and I thought "they're going to start to use this as a reason not to keep him on".*

## **The young people on-site**

### ***Into placement: the culture shock***

There were numerous accounts from employers (and staff) of lads entering placement without being fully aware of expectations in the workplace, and for whom placement would be something of a shock. The chapter on the young people noted that a good proportion felt that they already had the skills for employment. There was some concern among the staff that this translated into the young people considering that they 'already knew' all they needed to know before the placement, with or without the training period. It would come as a shock that they were really only just starting the learning process when they started on the trial. Rather tongue-in-cheek, but nevertheless making this serious point, one staff member recalled:

*"They thought when they went in that workshop [during the training period] and put together four rows of bricks that they could build a house".*

However, it was not just reconciliation with their lack of construction skills that lead to the shock of transition from training to placement. It was more generally what might be termed *the demands of working life*. This might be a combination of early starts and several hours work and the physical demands of working on site, of which a good proportion of lads had limited or no experience. As one staff member told us:

*"I think a lot of them went into it blind and they didn't realise how hard construction would be"*

According to Youthbuild staff, this shock came despite frequent warnings from them in the training phase:

*"One lad was moaning that he's never worked this hard in his life, and we're like, "This is what we've been trying to explain to you, it's very, very difficult. Why weren't you listening?"."*

Moreover, in addition to the shock of simply entering the world of work *per se*, employers suggested something particular about working *on-site*, or in a construction setting, that added an extra dimension to the lads experience and the demands made of them when settling into placement. At the very least, employers did seem to suggest

that an understanding and acceptance of what might be termed '*building site culture*' was something that both the lads and staff should be aware of and have. The seemingly innocuous activity of "banter" was cited by employers as perhaps best epitomising this. 'Banter' seemed to commonly include 'ribbing' or 'making fun of' each other, and was cited by more than one employer to have a positive social function:

*"Taking the piss out of each other helps get them [regular site lads] through the day."*

It is, one employer explained, "*part and parcel*" of being on site, without which the site "*wouldn't function*" as it does. The reason for the importance of this to understanding Youthbuild lads experience is that being the 'victim' of "piss-taking" appears to be predominantly hierarchically organised on-site, with those of lower status being the most likely targets<sup>7</sup>. In the case of Youthbuild lads, their status as the newest, and often youngest and least experienced and skilled led to them experiencing this banter. Alongside the necessary skills and work ethic then, this cultural aspect was something that employers seemed to suggest the lads should be able to take and get used to. Indeed, being subjected to, and being able to take this banter, and then join it with it was almost an initiation or test for the lads – to show that they could be part of the crowd. In effect, the test was whether the kids could turn being laughed at to laughing with their colleagues.

Staff seemed quick to realize (as did some employers – see below) that some of the lack of preparedness issues were a feature more of the younger lads on the project than some others. The better prepared ones seemed to be the older kids, who had had at least some experience of working full-time. In that sense, again, the issue of preparedness may not have been so much grounded in shortcomings in Youthbuild training and preparation activities, but rather in characteristics some of the lads brought with them to the project (i.e. age, inexperience). Indeed, the question of age and maturity came up at several points in the project, and was cited by both staff and employers as a potential and sometimes manifest problem. This appeared to have had a bearing on some of the lads' preparedness for placement, as well as their ability to smoothly adapt to it, and the Youthbuild staff were well aware of this:

*"There's a huge difference between a sixteen year old going out to work and an eighteen year old. I think the eighteen year old just are mature in a different way, the ability to work is different, but sixteen year olds, working in construction is hard."*

However, staff were aware that it would be very difficult not to allow kids onto placement just because they weren't considered to be 'culturally prepared' for the building site or too immature. As described in the previous chapter, there was an expectation (particularly among cohort 1) that placement was automatic anyway, let alone if they had then completed the training period successfully. As one staff recalled:

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<sup>7</sup> Although not exclusively. One manager admitted, "*I'm in charge of [in excess of 25] lads, and I still get the piss taken out of me*".



*"I'd tell them 'you'll be being placed', because that was the goal of [Youthbuild], to get them into jobs. And I think then you start to realise that they're not all capable, and what do you do with the ones who're not capable but think they are? Do you put them out and let them realise they're not capable, and lose the job with the company?"*

### ***Men or boys: Keyworker support or wiping babies' arses?***

It is important to understand that for employers' concern with immaturity, and the difficulties with banter etc, should be seen within the general cultural context of the very adult macho world of the construction industry. What the issue of banter demonstrated was that, by trying to establish themselves in construction employment, the lads were effectively asking to enter that macho world – to be taken seriously *as men*. In effect, the trial and placement periods were as much a trial and placement into adulthood and being men – seeing whether they could hack it in a man's world – as a test of whether they had the building skills. The lads must change from 'boys' (children or even babies) to 'men' if they are to be fully assimilated into employment on site. Being ready for work was tied up with concepts of maturity because, in this context, being ready for work meant essentially the same thing as being ready to be a man.

However, this was particularly problematic for the Youthbuild lads. As we have seen in the chapter on the young people, they have considerable difficulties that require support; but real "men" are not supposed to be vulnerable or weak, or need support. This produced a real tension within the project. How can the lads be provided with the support that will address the barriers to employment, when that support (and needing it) will in effect exclude them from being accepted into the work culture, and so sustained employment? It was a problem that could never be fully resolved.

It led to a perception among some employers that the lads were at times "too cosseted" by Youthbuild, and a resistance from the employers to being put in the same situation themselves. Using the child metaphor directly, one employer summed this up by stating *"we're not here to wipe their arses for them"*. However, the tension usually manifested itself in perceptions of the support offered by [female] keyworkers; they were seen as the mothering the lads in a way that prevented their transition into manhood. It was the keyworker who the young person *"can phone up with the slightest problem"* (Employer), thus preventing them from being forced to stand on their own two feet as men. Using the same metaphor as above, the presence of the keyworker made it difficult for the young people to be men when *"they did everything but wipe their arses"* (Employer).

The Youthbuild staff were aware of this perception but were faced with a difficult balancing act between passing over ownership to employers and both providing the support that the keyworker role was in place for, and monitoring attendance on site etc.

As such, the continued support of keyworkers once the clients started their placement could be problematic, and lead to a certain degree of difficulties between the Project and employers. In a more tangible sense, this cultural tension manifested itself as employers

perceiving the monitoring of the lads by keyworkers whilst on placement as being exaggerated, unnecessary, and perhaps even unhelpful. This was clearly felt by the staff:

*"the thing that sticks out the most is contractors feel like we are mothering them by coming down every week."* (Staff)

And, of course, the perception of the keyworker as an adult babying or mothering the young person was not restricted to the employer. The other workers would perceive it in the same way, and thus the young person would be left in no doubt as to the tension and barrier that this created to his acceptance as a 'proper man' and 'proper worker'. There was at least one report from Youthbuild staff of this having had a directly negative impact on the lad's experience in placement. As one staff recalled comments made by other employees on the site where her lad was working:

*"Some of them at some of the sites they're like "oh here's your babysitter...and that was another reason why I pulled away from meeting them at dinner time."*

So, this keyworker tried to adopt practices like meeting the lad away from the site afterwork. Other lads might be met in the keyworkers car, out of sight of their place of work. In an attempt to reduce the salience and lessen the impact of this on the lad in question, this particular staff member recalled her lad asking if she could *"just say you're my sister?"*.

However, there may be an additional layer to the employers' resistance to keyworker support. Again analysed culturally, there may have been tension between a perceived 'change of ownership' of the lads once they had moved from training to placement, with the employers wanting to take control of the young people and resenting interference. To the Youthbuild staff, these young people may have been their clients, who were going on a work placement; to the employers, they were fundamentally workers.

Nevertheless, against this resistance, it is crucial to recognise the importance of the other side of the tense relationship – the support offered by the keyworker while the young person was in placement. Generally, the nature of the keyworking relationships as the lads progressed into placement seems to have continued to develop as a close one. This is perhaps best exemplified in moments and contexts reported by staff when some of the lads could have a 'break' from the site and interact with their keyworker. Indeed, this appears to have been one of the moments in the projects' placement phase when the keyworker role came into its own – *"that's when you get the most out of the lads, when you are in your car having the informal chats"* one staff recalled. Indeed, there were quite touching accounts of how some of the lads came to perceive their allocated staff:

*"[keyworker name], you're an absolute angel, I knew you were sent to look after me on this course"*, one staff recalled having had one lad say to her.

It should be noted that the early interruption of these keyworker relationships was a particular cause of angst for the Youthbuild staff. They felt that the ending of these relationships, caused by the closing of the project through lack of funding, was letting

the young people down without any closure to their support. *"I thought you said 'as long as it takes", one lad was reported as saying to his keyworker.*

### ***Understanding the young people's problems and flexibility***

However, the cultural tension described above did not mean that the employers were ignorant of the support needs of the young people – so the tension was not only felt by the staff. Albeit within the overall construction culture, employers appeared generally to be both aware of, and sensitive to, the various difficulties in the young people's lives that acted as barriers or risk factors for success on the programme and for employment in general. Indeed, there largely appeared to be a willingness to accommodate to them. For example, although there were clear interpretations of what constituted appropriate and inappropriate behaviour on site, employers showed a certain tolerance for potentially negative behaviour from the lads. Indeed, this willingness to be 'flexible' and 'understanding' with Youthbuild lads behaviour was something highlighted by Youthbuild staff as essential to the project. There seemed to be a general recognition that the lads taking part in the project were *"up against it"* (Employer), by virtue of their socio-economic position, personal and domestic circumstances (which most employers seemed sensitive to), and peer-group influences. The lads, to put it in the words of one employer, were exposed to:

*"all the kinds of things you wouldn't want your [own] kids to be exposed to."*

According to staff, however, this attitude was not universal across employers. Problems and breakdown could occur when employers failed to realise and make allowances for the circumstances of the young people:

*"Some of them were really, really good and like "we understand". [But] some used to phone and go on "well he was late yesterday" And [my response] was like "well you're getting somebody who's never worked before in his life and you're going to have a few teething problems with him"."*

### ***Resentment at low wages, and reaping the rewards***

Alongside cultural aspects of working on-site, economic issues (specifically remuneration) were cited by more than one employer and on more than one site as being a potential 'barrier' to the success of any particular lad's stint on site. Indeed, the issue of low payment for the lads during the trial period did appear to make several employers uncomfortable. The fact that the Youthbuild lads were working for little – or no – money for a hard day's work was something employers appeared to perceive as somewhat unfair. The matter of pay appeared to have been an easy conversational topic for Youthbuild lads to engage in with more established young people on site, and if and when Youthbuild lads discovered that young people employed on more permanent were being paid several times their wage for doing essentially identical work, employers recognised the potential problems this may cause.

According to employers, although most lads appeared to accept this and “*knuckle down*”, this did lead to a certain amount of de-motivation and resentment on the part of some lads, with some dropping out:

*“It’s not good if someone else next to you is earning more money for the same job”.*

### ***Transition to full-pay placement – increased employer interest***

Indeed, the ability and willingness to carry on in placement with this knowledge was seen as a virtue in the lads and a measure of strong character and dedication to the job – “*it takes a strong person*” to do this one employer told us. Fortunately, employers saw a light at the end of the tunnel for such lads, as they became earmarked by employers for fully paid and more permanent work. It was not uncommon for employers to declare (often quite enthusiastically) that they’d be “*keeping on*” good lads they’d earmarked and “*taking them to other jobs*”.

An important point raised in respect of future employment was the utilisation of (employer) social networks. At least one employer had recommended Youthbuild lads to employers who had not actually taken part in Youthbuild. Although this appeared to be predominantly casual and temporary work, the use of ‘word-of-mouth’ seems to have been a definite channel for future employment opportunities for Youthbuild lads.

Over the placement phase the project would see several ‘success stories’ – lads that would not only adequately adapt to working life on site, but who would in some case exceed expectations and excel in their work, leading to more secure employment after Youthbuild had finished.

The transition from Youthbuild funded lads to properly employed and paid employees seems also to have marked a shift in the relationship employers perceived they had with the Youthbuild lads, and there seemed then to be a real commitment to the lads who had proved themselves with an interest in assimilating them into the regular working team that employers had responsibility for.

Indeed, there was a noticeable interest expressed in the development of the lads, on both a personal and professional level. It was clear that some of the employers had ‘taken a shine’ to the positive and hard-working lads they had on site. There was an indication of a sort of pseudo-parenting role in place. Employers who seemed to display this orientation would often disclose that they “*had lads of a similar age*” themselves, who had also been at risk of “*getting into trouble*”. This empathy no doubt provided an additional dimension of support.

Career-wise, alongside “*keeping lads on*” or “*taking lads*” to other contracts, there was some indication that the lads should be encouraged to enter formal training and study to supplement their work-based experience. One employer cited a “*real good lad*” he had who had actually enquired about apprenticeship training, but who he felt unable to fully

support. Indeed, this support and encouragement to enter training was something that he thought future projects should factor in.

It is, of course, ironic that the employers should take this paternal interest, when being seen as mothered by the Youthbuild staff or child-like was a barrier to success on-site. Again, this irony is probably in part explained by the 'ownership' tension described above – attachment and support from the employers is fine because the young people work for them now and they are 'appropriate' to guide them. It is also partly explained by gender – the Youthbuild staff were encroaching on the male space of the building site, effectively domesticising the lads – whereas the employers are 'fatherly' showing their lads the ropes – akin to taking them on their first hunting trip. That kind of support, done in a macho way is clearly more acceptable.

One issue that did arise that warrants mention here pointed to what might be seen as a human resources management issue. This issue – relating to the 'numbers' of Youthbuild lads together in any one place at any one time – came up in more than one interview, and was invariably associated as a generally negative experience. On-site, one employer told us that *"two or three lads together isn't healthy"*, and that it might be best to *"segregate lads"* when they were on site. The impression given here was that potential 'gang' mentality may override individual orientation to work, and unnecessarily interfere with the working of the site. There was also the issue of control and authority with lads in groups. One employer cited and that he found this disconcerting.

## Summary

Staff clearly worked hard to establish relations with employers and arrange for appropriate placements. Employers' experiences revealed not only a willingness to support the lads but also their own evaluative criteria by which they were able to identify good and bad workers once in placement. Although the skills and competencies of the young people was an obvious factor evaluating them, a key theme that emerged was that of the cultural transition required of the young people when entering the construction environment as, in effect, a bona fide member of the workforce. This had to do with, at a general level, accommodating to the working day, but at a more specifically level the particular cultural expectations and relational dynamics of the construction site. Again, staff were shown to be sensitive of and able to respond to these contingencies of over this particular phase of the project.

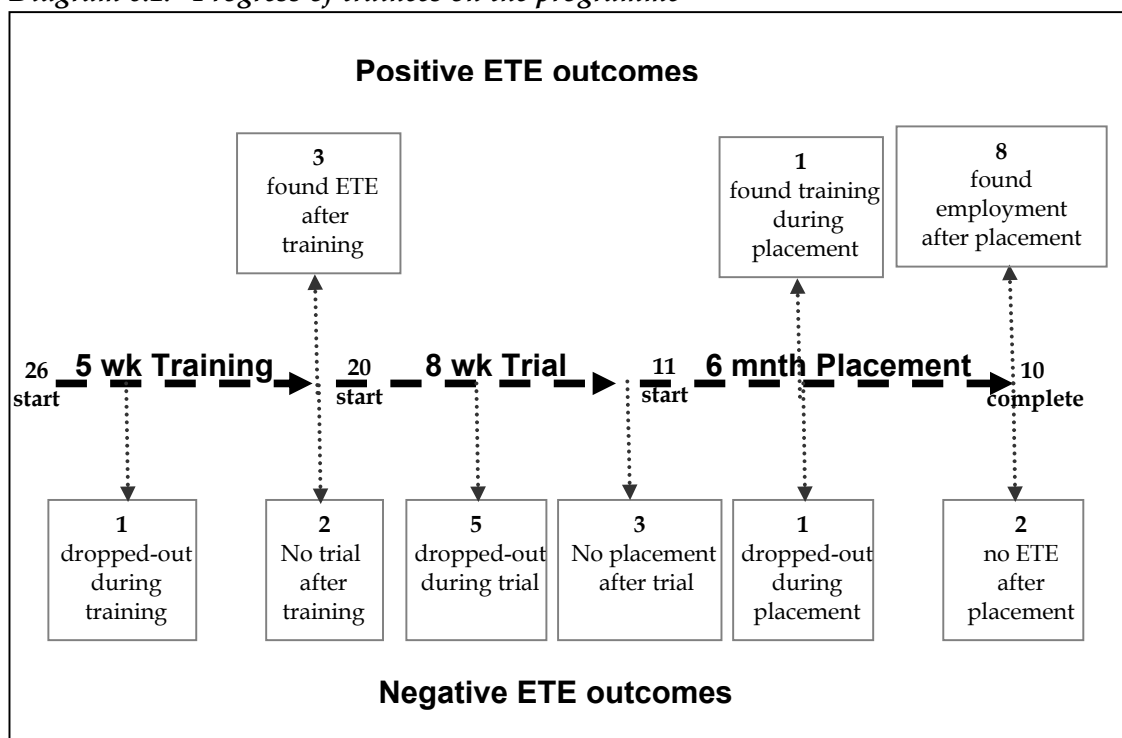
## 6 How the young people got on 1 – Progress and employment success

The first of two chapters examining the outcomes for the young people involved with Salford Youthbuild, this chapter charts their progress through the programme – focusing on ETE outcome. It considers different measures of successful progress in the programme, wider ETE outcomes, and changes in attitudes to work. Finally, it considers clients' perceptions of how helpful the project was for them.

### Completion and positive progress

Charting the 26 young people who started on the Youthbuild through the programme (both cohorts considered together) presents a very mixed picture of progress (see the diagram below). First, almost all of the young people completed the initial five week classroom based training phase of the project (25/26). A key focus of that period is working towards and sitting for the health and safety CSCS card, which then allows the client to work on a construction site. Although 3 clients already had their card when they started on the project, a further 20 (data on 1 missing) gained their card through Youthbuild. This is a tangible and important measure of success (and, as we will see below, this is not underestimated by the young people) because it is both prepares the clients for work, and gives them a key advantage over other jobseekers in the future.

*Diagram 6.1: Progress of trainees on the programme*



Base: 26; All

Beyond their initial training phase, however, the most crude outcome measure would be those who reached the end of the programme. According to this measure, 10 out of the 26 clients were successful “completers” (38%).

However, reaching the end of the programme is not the same thing as achieving entry into education, training or employment, which was the main measure of success set established by the project at the outset. Indeed, only 8 of the 10 “completers” found ETE after the placement, which was 31% of those starting the programme. This, then would be the strictest measure of success – that just about a third of those on Youthbuild completed the programme and entered into ETE. For the young people who entered the project to try to end directly their unemployment, they would look on their time involved as succeeding or failing according to their employment status at the end of it:

*“There was some useful stuff. But at the end of the day, I didn’t get anything out of it, did I?” (Client 3)*

*“It’s turned out everything that I wanted it to be. I wanted a course that would help me get a job, and they worked into getting me into work. Where I wanted to be in life.” (Client 4)*

It is noted elsewhere in the report, however, that the fact that 2 of the clients failed to find employment at the end of the placement was more to do with employers laying off workers in the recession rather than a failure of the young people or the Youthbuild staff. As such, in the current climate, this would be a tough measure of success that did not reflect the proper impact of the project. Unfortunately, for some of the lads then, the employment picture looked as bleak as before Youthbuild:

*“I got laid off before Christmas. Since then I’ve been looking for job’s but it’s the credit crunch so nobody’s taking on workers. I’m thinking of joining the army.” (Client 2)*

*“I’ve been trying to get a job but there’s nothing out there.” (Client 3)*

In addition, measuring entry into ETE at the end of the programme fails to take into account that young people may leave early in order to take up ETE opportunities. Indeed, 3 young people found ETE at or near the end of their five week training period, and 1 during the placement. Whether or not this was as a direct result of being more attractive to employers after their training or indirectly because of increased confidence etc is unclear, but this has to be considered a positive outcome for the young people. As such, if these 4 young people are added to the 8 who found employment at the end of the programme, 12 young people had a **positive ETE outcome** from (or during) Youthbuild (46%). Taking this and the above outside recession problems into account, the most generous measure of completion success would be that 14 of the 26 (54%) young people who started Youthbuild finished the programme or left early with a positive outcome – what could be described as a **“positive progression outcome”** (completed or positive ETE outcome).

The reasons for the other 12 young people leaving Youthbuild early were varied, but the majority (8 out of 12) were from the client “dropping-out” of their own accord rather

than the project failing to accommodate. Most of those (5) dropped out during the eight week trial period in construction, and the reasons given by staff suggested that it was this point that some of the young people felt that the work just “wasn’t for me” and stopped turning up. The person who dropped out for training during the placement gave an insight into this sort of decision during the early part of their working on-site:

*“I finished on the 8 weeks, and then started on the placement. It lasted about a week. But that’s when I went to college instead. I heard about the maintenance course. I didn’t really like the labouring so I dropped out of it [placement].” (Client 5)*

When asked to give any factors that may have made working more difficult during the programme, 3 of the 17 young people who gave an answer mentioned clashes with bosses or colleagues on site. However, project staff clearly tried to intervene when there was a problem during this trial period or placement, and 5 clients were moved to other employers. The following two quotations illustrate the sort of clashes that the lads ran into (and how they could be inclined to escalate the situation):

*“He was just being a funny guy with me cos his business was going down hill cos he wasn’t getting any work. He was telling me things over and over again and I was saying, “I know”. “But you don’t know” – just little things like that...It was just him and me and his wife.” (Client 6)*

*“One of the guys on site was bullying. I’m not one of those who will just take it...I made some phone calls to get him sorted out. But then Leah got on the phone saying that she’d have to phone the police. But then the boss said that it would be best with me not coming in. I wasn’t the one who started it, yet I got laid off.” (Client 2)*

To an extent, it could be that these clashes were associated with the lads trying to cope with the lads trying to cope with the transition to the new macho culture, with banter etc as described previously. The “bullying” above that the lad would not just take was effectively construction site interaction, mixed with an element of initiation, mixed with on-site hierarchy. The lads who coped best and progressed were those who accepted their place, accepted the culture and understood that there was a process of earning the workers’ respect:

*“The placement was mint. They trusted me with things. You had to learn their respect.” (Client 1)*

Youthbuild staff reported that they had tried to explain to the lads that them that this respect needed to be built on ‘knuckling down’ to hard work rather than forwarding the identity that may have sufficed on the street or with their mates:

*“[We were] trying to explain to the lads, they don’t want to know about who you went robbing with last night, they don’t want to know how many cars you’ve nicked, it may impress you mates and the people you hang about with but it doesn’t impress them”. (Staff)*



Nevertheless, these would appear to have been ways the lads sought to adapt to their new environment by drawing on aspects of identity they felt familiar with and safe with. It is clear that making such 'laddish' claims where 'piss-taking' was a cultural practice would seem to have been a risky strategy.

Other reasons given by staff for individuals dropping-out of the programme more generally included family problems and problems with the criminal justice system (e.g. going into custody for a prior offence – the risk of which was actually meant to have been declared to Youthbuild staff at the time of referral).

It is interesting to note that on asking Youthbuild staff to make a judgement of success or failure on each of the 26 young people, their rating was positive for more than even the widest measure of "positive progression outcome" above. Youthbuild staff rated 15 clients (58%) as having had a successful involvement with the programme. These 15 "*successful clients*" included all of the 14 positive progression outcomes, and plus one other. Clearly, this points to the Youthbuild staff judging success on mainly on completion of the programme or a positive outcome of ETE, but with the possibility of wider impact. The wider impact of Youthbuild on the young people will be considered in the next chapter.

### *Factors affecting positive progress*

There were four factors that, statistically, predicted whether the young person achieved positive progress (completion or ETE outcome) at the end of their time with Youthbuild. One of these related to their background, one was a physical characteristic and two related to attitude. In relation to background, a young person was more likely to have had a positive progress outcome if they had not been permanently excluded from a school or college (chi-square=7.987, 1 df,  $p=0.005$ ). There was a fairly strong correlation between stability and progression at school and on Youthbuild ( $\Phi=0.589$ ). Consequently, if the project wished to ensure greater completion or ETE success, it could filter referrals on the basis of accepting those who had not been permanently excluded in the past. Of course, this correlation could perhaps also serve as a reminder of the dangers of having simple measures of like completion or employment for an intervention like Youthbuild – by taking on the most challenging young people with the worse backgrounds it will always worsen its of success measured in this way.

One personal characteristic at the time of starting Youthbuild was also significantly related to positive progress on the programme – the health of the young person. The higher the Youthbuild staff had rated the risk of poor health interfering with employment, the lower the success rate (chi-square=13.163, 5 df,  $p=0.022$ ). Again, the relationship was fairly strong as a predictor (Cramer's  $V=0.726$ ). Like the previous predictor, this correlation could serve as a warning against such simple measures of success. This study also showed that one of the biggest areas of improvement was in the young people's health; if achieving positive progress in ETE or completion was the main aim and priority of such a programme, and clients were selected in accordance, it would miss on an important area of achievement with the young people.

Two statements relating to a young person's attitude to employment at the time of starting Youthbuild were significantly associated with positive progress on the Programme. First, the young people were more likely to succeed if they had not felt that they had only "done work for the money" in the past (chi-square=10.086, 4 df, p=0.039). Again, the association was fairly strong (Cramer's V=0.729). Second, they were more likely to succeed if they had not "tended to avoid work" in the past (chi-square=12.073, 3 df, p=0.007), with a similar strength of relationship between the two (Cramer's V=0.729). This result suggests that clients were less likely to complete the programme or enter into ETE if they did not see any intrinsic satisfaction in employment, but instead undertook it reluctantly because it was a monetary necessity. The importance of attitude generally, and of seeing the intrinsic value of the work enthusiastically in particular, was noted by the young people themselves. They argued that it was clear right from the first week who would do well in the project by observing if they had a positive attitude:

*"There were people on the course that you could see from the word go were never going to complete it. In the first week, they had the attitude, 'I don't want to do this, I don't want a job'. I was thinking to myself, why come here and waste your time. I wanted a job, not just the £50 a week." (Client 8)*

*"You either knuckle down and get on with it or you mess about and don't get a placement. There's only two ways that you can do Youthbuild. You either want to do it or you don't want to do it. It's not for everyone cos there's been prats who have messed about and not turned up and that. You need a good attitude towards the people that you're going to be working for. You can always know from people's attitude. You can look at a young lad and just know that they're not going to turn up. I would have been a lot stricter [if I'd have been staff] – you mess about, that's it." (Client 4)*

The latter quotation above again raises the question of whether the project should have excluded clients who did not display the right attitude, or even selected on the basis of measurable attitude in the first place. This would have increased positive progress rates, but would have denied the young people any other improvements from Youthbuild, perhaps even improvements in attitudes to work.

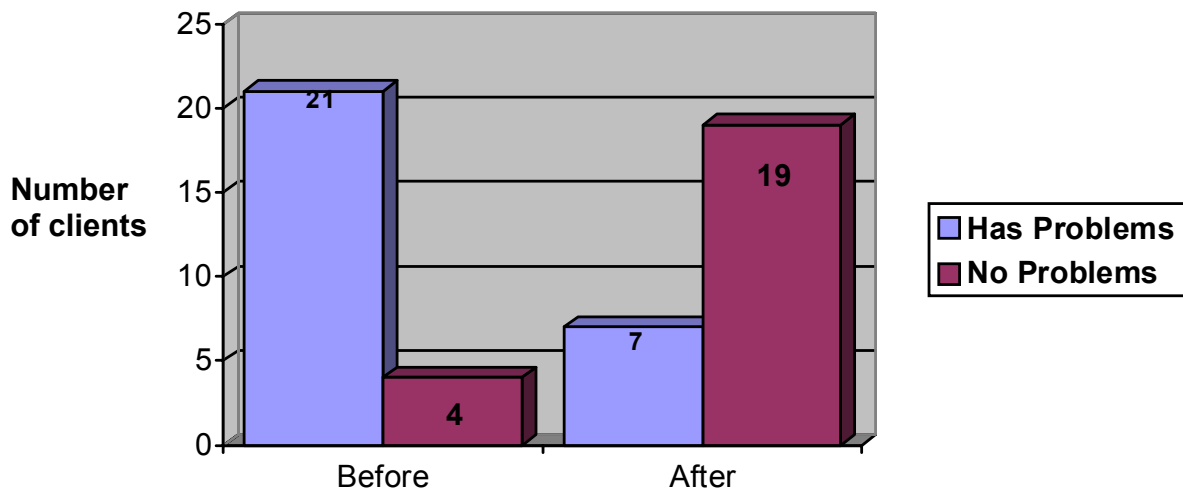
Thus, this relationship between attitude and progress demonstrates both of the warnings completion or ETE as a measure of success. Not only does the programme lower its success rate by taking on those who need most help engaging with ETE, but focusing on those most likely to succeed would also deprive the others of area of improvement in the study, greater intrinsic satisfaction from work (see Chapter below).

## **Education, training and employment**

This section of the chapter focuses more closely on the ETE outcomes for the young people, including the extent of that activity and their attitudes towards it. As with the following sections of this chapter, we will draw comparisons with their situation, attitudes and behaviours at the time of starting on Youthbuild.

It was noted in the chapter on the young people that they were considered by staff to have multiple issues that made involvement with ETE difficult for them. Many of these were indirect risk factors (e.g. in relation to housing or health), but some directly related to ETE such as difficulties with reading and writing or strained relationships with recent employers. Without reference to their previous answers, Youthbuild staff were asked to consider such issues again for each young person following their involvement with the project – with some substantial shifts (see Graph below). The staff indicated a dramatic turnaround in the numbers of young people who were considered to have ETE specific problems. Whereas at the start of the programme, almost all (21/25) were considered to have such difficulties, this had been reduced to less than a third (7/26). Unsurprisingly, this is a statistically significant improvement ( $<0.05$ , McNamar Test).

*Graph 6.1: Number of young people with ETE problems*



Base: 25; 1 missing

A similar shift is clear when Youthbuild staff were asked to consider whether risk and protective factors relating directly to ETE are likely to make it easier or harder for the young people to find employment success. Whereas at the beginning of the programme their ETE problems were considered to make things harder for the majority of the young people (14/25), that is now only the case with the minority (7/26). Indeed, for almost half of the clients (12/26), their ETE situation was considered to have turned into a positive protective factor that was actually likely to increase their employment success. This was certainly reflected in the views of the young people, who argued that, even if Youthbuild did not directly result in a job, they were more prepared for future employment. Primarily, the lads stressed increased confidence in the process of applying for a job, and that knowing this increased their confidence:

*“At first, I wouldn’t have had a clue how to get a job. But they’ve shown me the ropes and shown me what to do.” (Client 8)*

*"Now I wouldn't hesitate going into an interview. Back then, I wouldn't know what to say, going into an interview." (Client 4)*

*"It made me more confident to get into a job, cos you practised interviews and that." (Client 5)*

Secondly, they argued that the construction and training skills that they learnt would put them one step ahead when applying for jobs:

*"Youthbuild's taught me a lot with the plastering and building frames, first aid course, and got my abrasive wheels ticket to use grinders. Without that I wouldn't be able to use grinders on here." (Client 7)*

*"It's worked for me because it's got me a couple of jobs. And got a bit of skills that I need so that if I need another job and they ask me if I've got the skills, then I have and hopefully that will get me onto that job permanently." (Client 6)*

In particular, the lads valued the CSCS health and safety card earned during training – a source of pride for self esteem, and confidence for the future:

*"I got my abrasive wheels certificate and my CSCS card. It gives me a better chance if I went for an interview on a site." (Client 5)*

*"I always had a good attitude to work, but it teaches you that you have to wear your safety gear and look out for everyone else around you. It's not just about you on a building site, but everyone around you. Your mistake could be somebody else's injury. All different parts to it. I loved it." (Client 4)*

Likewise, lads who were currently in jobs felt more confident that the project had given them both the confidence and the contacts to find alternative employment if they were made redundant:

*"On site, I'm talking to other subcontractors. So, if I ever did get laid off, I could go to them and ask if there's any jobs there. Once you're on a site, you get numbers for everyone." (Client 8)*

However, it should be noted that there was still a small core group of the same size as previously (n4) for which it was considered that ETE problems would make success "very much harder".

### ***Employment activity since Youthbuild – and the turnaround in fortunes***

13 out of the 26 young people on Youthbuild found education, employment or training immediately after leaving the programme (we include here one client who left Youthbuild to go into custody, but found employment immediately after release). This section looks in more detail about what they were doing when we caught up with them in the weeks following. At that time, 13 out of the 21 who responded to questionnaires were in ETE (see table below). Although the figures of those in ETE represent only half

of those on the programme, they should be contrasted with the 92% who had not been in ETE in the month prior to Youthbuild and the 23% for whom the time out had been more than a year.

In essence, the overwhelming story from the Youthbuild clients is one of the project opening doors for them in employment – giving them a “second chance” and facilitating work where they had no hope of work before. The quotations below illustrate a picture of *change* in their employment fortunes, and then wider in their life – and they were clear that the project was responsible. As this is such a fundamental aspect of both the aim and impact of Youthbuild, and of the stories recounted by the young people, it is important to hear a selection of the lads describing the turnaround in their fortunes, their renewed employment (and wider) hope following their involvement:

*“This time last year, I know what I was like. I felt life was over [cos got driving ban and couldn’t get work]...I was out every day for months looking for a job. Nothing going. And then when I came here, a few weeks later, I walked into one.” (Client 1)*

*“Otherwise I wouldn’t have got a job with the credit crunch, I wouldn’t have got nothing. Get on Youthbuild, one phone call and “You want to come and work on the site.” Descent money. If I’d have put in an application form [before], there’s not a chance that they would have looked at me with no qualifications or anything. So Youthbuild’s got me the job and they’ve took me on. That’s given me a second chance...The job goes to Glasgow after this. I’ve never worked away before so that will be more independence, fresh and something knew.” (Client 7)*

*“I’ve always had that attitude towards working, but it’s finding the work at that age with no qualifications, noone willing to take you on. It’s getting the work and Youthbuild helped a lot. If it wasn’t for Youthbuild, I wouldn’t be sat here now, would I [after work]?” (Client 4)*

*“It’s hard if you’re a young person out there trying to get work, people turn their nose up at you. But if you come on Youthbuild, show yourself, Leah opens some doors and that gives you a chance to prove yourself. I’ve worked for a couple of firms through Youthbuild, proved myself, and they’ve asked me back. And that’s how I’ve got more work, through Youthbuild. I can certainly say that I wouldn’t be where I am without Youthbuild.” (Client 4)*

**Table 6.1: Employment activity following Youthbuild**

Type of ETE	Frequency	Percent
Construction job	9	43%
Non-construction job	1	5%
Apprenticeship	1	5%
Construction training	1	5%
Non-construction training	1	5%
Not in a job or training	8	38%

Base: 21; 5 missing

The majority of the young people who were now in ETE (9/13) were in employment in the construction industry – the intended focus of Youthbuild. They were in various aspects of the industry, including 1 in glazing, 2 in joinery, 1 in roofing and 3 in general labouring. In addition, a further 2 clients were in a related apprenticeship or construction industry training. The final two clients in ETE had moved away from construction, with one working and training in a non-related industry (catering). For the majority (9/13), their work or training was full-time.

**Table 6.2: Money earned per week by the young people in current job**

Wage	Frequency	Percentage	Percent in recent job before Yb
Under £100	4	31%	19%
£100-£149	1	8%	19%
£150-£199	1	8%	33%
£200-£250	2	15%	24%
More than £250	5	54%	5%

Base: 13 All in ETE

As the table above shows, the amount of money earned by the young people varied greatly, as it did in their most recent job prior to youth build. However, if the three clients in work training (earning under £100) are removed, it is clear that the pattern has shifted to clients earning relatively more money. Whereas prior to Youthbuild the most recent salary for the majority of the young people had been between £150 and £250, now the majority were earning more than £250:

*“Best job I’ve had this. The other jobs were only paying me £140 a week...I’m on £1300 a month or something like that. Not bad for someone who came out of school with no qualifications and who was in trouble with the police.” (Client 7)*

As such, the immediate benefit on the lads was on an economic level affecting quality of life, as this staff member and young person concurred:

*“They all were, you know, looking forward to buying clothes every weekend and some of them were saving up for driving lessons, the quality of life completely improved.” (Staff)*

*“I’ve got money in my pocket now. I can go out and buy things like new clothes. And save – I’m saving up for a bike at the moment. And you can do stuff like that really.” (Client 9)*

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the large majority of the young people still stated that they were having at least some difficulty with money (19/21 compared with 21/25 at the start of the programme). Within this negative aspect, there is something positive, however. When asked about sources of finance over the past four weeks none of the 20 young people who responded said that they got any money in criminal or other “dodgy ways”. This contrasts to five who admitted this at the beginning of Youthbuild – it gave them a legitimate route to money:

*"Before I was going out and getting money whatever way I could, selling whatever for it. Stealing things. And that." (Client 8)*

### **Attitudes to work**

The chapter on the characteristics of the young people at the beginning of their time on the programme noted that they had a pretty positive attitude to their past employment and to work in general. The table below shows the proportions agreeing with statements about their employment since starting Youthbuild, and compares these figures as aggregate percentages with the percentages reported from previous employment. The figures for "enjoying the jobs" and being "good at the jobs" have more or less stayed the same, but other figures have changed somewhat. The answer that has become more negative relates to liking going to work (61% compared to 76%), although the majority were still positive. Interestingly, however, the improvements related to intrinsic satisfaction from jobs – including finding the work "really satisfying" (up slightly by 14%), "dreading getting up in the morning" (changed by 23%) and "only done work for the money" (changed by 35%). This suggests that the young people were getting much more from their work, perhaps feeling that they were fitting and settling in:

*"This is better than most jobs I've had. You learn something new each day. Most jobs have been same old same old, but you never know what you're going to do each day." (Client 7)*

**Table 6.3: Attitudes to employment since starting Youthbuild**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Proportion agree</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Percent agreeing before Yb</b>
I've enjoyed the jobs that I've done	15/19	79%	84%
I've dreaded getting up in the morning	3/18	17%	40%
Work has been really satisfying	14/19	74%	60%
I'm good at the jobs I do	17/18	94%	95%
I've only done work for the money	6/18	33%	68%
I've liked going to work	11/18	61%	76%

Base: 21; Missing/'Can't say' varies

It is recognised that improvements in attitude and behaviour for young people with established difficulties is often small and gradual. As such, these questions were asked and analysed on a more detailed five-point scales from "very true" to "not at all true". The figure below notes the number of individual clients who moved up or down the scale (in the direction of better or worse attitude), rather than as an aggregate percentage as above. The results show that two thirds (10/15) of clients (for whom before and after data are available) improved their ratings on whether they dreaded getting up. In the other statements, this figure was more like a third of the clients improved, even for "liked going to work" which showed an aggregate worsening in the table above (so a few liked work a lot less, but a higher number liked it slightly more). Overall then, the attitudes to their employment remained pretty high; a good proportion improved their ratings in every category, but some got worse.

*Figure 6.1: Number of individuals improving or reducing attitudes ratings for jobs they've done*

		Dreaded getting up	Work can be satisfying	I'm good at jobs I do	Only done work for money	I've liked gong to work
Total better		n10	n6	n5	n6	n5
Attitude ↕ Worse Better →	+3	n1	-	-	n1	-
	+ 2	n4	n2	-	n4	n1
	+ 1	n5	n4	n5	n1	n4
	Same	n4	n5	n7	n3	n6
	-1	n1	n4	n2	n4	n1
	- 2	-	-	-	-	n2
	-3	-	-	n1	-	n1
Total worse		n1	N4	n3	n4	n4
Bases:		15	14	15	13	15
Those answering question at both T1 and T2						

The table below considers the aggregate figures for attitude to work in general which will incorporate their time since starting Youthbuild, but also previous employment. Again, this is compared to the percentage agreeing with the statements ("Very true" or "true" on the scale) at the beginning of their time on the programme. This table does not show any substantial changes in attitudes, which remain pretty positive towards work (although interestingly we do not get the same substantial positive change in the question on intrinsic satisfaction from work). This suggests that the positive changes in attitudes to their employment are still staying fairly specific in their minds to their recent "Youthbuild-inspired" employment – it has not been generalised.

*Table 6.4: Attitudes to work in general*

Statement	Proportion agree	Percent	Percent agreeing before Yb
Work is boring	5/18	28%	26%
Work is enjoyable	16/19	84%	69%
I've tended to avoid work	1/18	6%	13%
I've really tried to get work	16/20	80%	83%
I've the skills for work	15/19	79%	88%
Work can be satisfying	13/18	72%	76%

Base: All, Missing/'Can't say' varies

Looking again at changes up and down the scale at the disaggregated level, we similarly find that there has not been the scale of improvements that we found when specifically considering the jobs that they have done since starting Youthbuild. The main



improvement was in thinking that “work is enjoyable”. The latter slight improvement in individuals perceptions of their own abilities (which always quite high as a group), is also reflected in the small decrease in proportion reporting that they had some difficulties in having the right skills for employment (14/21 or 66%, from 72% at the start of Youthbuild).

**Figure 6.2: Number of individuals improving or reducing attitudes ratings for work in general**

		Work is boring	Work is enjoyable	Tended to avoid work	Really tried to get work	I’ve the skills for work	Work can be satisfying
<b>Total better</b>		n4	n10	n7	n5	n6	n5
Attitude ↕ Worse ↕ Better	+4	-	n2	-	-	n1	-
	+3	n1	-	-	-	-	-
	+2	n1	-	n1	n2	-	n1
	+1	n2	n8	n6	n3	n5	n4
	Same	n6	n5	n4	n9	n9	n7
	-1	n3	n3	n5	n3	n2	n2
	-2	n2	n1	-	n1	n1	n3
	-3	-	-	n2	-	-	-
	<b>Total worse</b>	n5	n4	n7	n4	n3	n5
Bases:		15	19	18	18	18	17
Those answering question at both T1 and T2							

Certainly, qualitative comments from the young people suggested an improved attitude to work in general, with some cases acknowledging Youthbuild as reigniting their interest in work or making them more determined to find work:

*“My girlfriend would say that I’m more willing to work now. I’m more positive because I know what to expect with the experience and what type of work I’d be doing. So, I’m more positive.”(Client 2)*

*“The first five weeks was useful, great. It was learning five different things over the five weeks. It was great. Plastering and bricklaying I found that I was interested in and good at doing. Before, I wasn’t really interested in any of it. But that’s what would make me want to do it again.” (Client 4)*

*“It made me more determined to get a job and get out there, cos when I was working on the building site it was good. I was out at work instead of sat around doing nothing. I was more lazy than anything [before].” (Client 5)*

## Perceptions of Youthbuild's help

The large majority of the young people themselves considered that Youthbuild had been helpful to them (see table below; with greyed figures from the previous questions on how helpful they expected Youthbuild to be – detailed in the chapter on “The Young People”). More than 90% (19/21) of the young people considered that the programme overall had been helpful, with almost two-thirds of these perceiving that it was “very helpful”:

*“It’s bringing people in who’ve not got jobs and you’re getting a job out of it. So it does help people.” (Client 5)*

*“It gives individuals a second chance, for a new start. It will keep them off the streets, keep them from drinking on the streets. Giving them a new opportunity to not go and drink on the streets any more. Get a job, get them motivated. You’re keeping people off the streets, aren’t you?...It’s been good to me. It’s good to young individuals like me. It’s turned my life around for the better.” (Client 7)*

*“They couldn’t do a better job. They found me work, they helped me out. Got me in college, done everything. I couldn’t ask for more, really.” (Client 1)*

*“It’s the best thing I’ve done since I left college cos it’s helped me get a few jobs and it’s helped me get a bit of experience of bricklaying and stuff.” (Client 6)*

It is interesting to note that these figures for the subjective views of those who have experienced the project are much higher than any of the objective measures of completion, ETE outcome or staff-judged success noted above. This could be for one (or both) of two reasons – either the young people perceived helpful benefits from Youthbuild even if the clients did not complete the programme or immediately find ETE, or (/and) they were personally considering an *even* wider definition of impact from their experience than the staff did when they had considered “success”.

**Table 6.5: Perceptions of Youthbuild helpfulness**

Area of help	Very helpful	Fairly helpful	Percent helpful	Percent expecting helpful
How helpful overall	12	7	91%	96%
Helpfulness of work period	10/17	6/17	94%	-
Learning to organise my time	10	5	71%	92%
Learning construction skills	13	5	86%	96%
Finding work afterwards	10	5	71%	-
Dealing with problems in life	7	5	57%	78%
Gaining confidence	8	10	86%	91%

Base: 21, 5 missing

Further questioning on helpfulness suggests that both reasons are correct. On the first, almost all of the young people who entered a period of work trial or placement found that it was helpful (16/17; 94%), and the majority of those found it very helpful. These numbers are higher than the figure of 10 who completed the placement (let alone smaller figure of 8 who then found employment). That means that the young people considered that it was not necessary to have completed the work placement to have received benefits from it:

*"I got a job out of it, and if I'd have liked it, I'd have still been doing it. [But I got] experience...going on building sites and seeing what it's like on there." (Client 5)*

In addition, the 15 clients who found that Youthbuild was helpful in finding work afterwards is higher than the figure of 12 young people who did find work or even training (even if they did not complete). This suggests that the young people felt that the project was making progress towards ETE even if it had not yet met that goal for each individual. This is likely to be, at least in part, because the great majority of clients felt that the project had been helpful in teaching them construction skills (18/21) – likely to be useful for future work.

As mentioned previously, of particular importance to the young people in helping their work chances (even if they did not find work immediately) was helping them gain their CSCS card. This was mentioned by a number of clients as being a particularly useful outcome (and a discernible one) from Youthbuild (the numbers achieving are noted under ETE below):

*"I got my CSCS card out of it, and learnt how to mix for bricklaying and that." (Client 2)*

Second, it is clear that the young people felt impact beyond just ETE, and perhaps even beyond wider staff measures of success. A good majority of the young people felt that the project had been helpful in helping them in other ways, including: learning to organise their time (17/21); dealing with problems in life (12/21); and gaining confidence (18/21). Asking the young people specifically about other ways that the project was helpful gave a slight flavour of the wide ranging impact of the project, perhaps in subtle ways – but felt as important to the young people themselves in progressing their lives. Areas of help mentioned included helping them to control their emotions or moods, helping them to find a flat and move, giving them lifts to work when necessary, and just calling them and keeping them engaged:

*"It's still been successful cos it still got us into jobs and experience and the CSCS card and stuff like that." (Client 2)*

*"It should continue, to give other lads opportunities. You don't get many opportunities to get jobs and training and CSCS cards. It's either that, or the money is going to go to the banks. The Government gives all those billions to the banks, but it can't give a few grand to Youthbuild – a training course." (Client 2)*

Although each of these figures are slightly lower than the expectations that the young people had at the start of their time on the project, they still represent a largely positive experience for the large majority. Moreover, when asked what they liked about the programme (see table below), the young people's answers tended to concur with the picture of what they found helpful above. Generally, they liked the fact that the project helped them to get work and more money, albeit sometimes temporarily (6/18). They also liked the progress that it would give them towards employment in the future, such as the learning and obtaining their CSCS card (4/18).

**Table 6.6: What trainees most liked about Youthbuild**

What most liked	Frequency	Percent
Everything	1	6%
Flexible with all of us	1	6%
Getting work and money	6	33%
Meeting new people	6	33%
Learning new stuff and passing CSCS test	4	22%

Base: 18, 8 missing

There were two additional areas stressed by the young people in qualitative interviews. The first was the particular helpfulness by the Youthbuild staff, individually or collectively. As noted elsewhere in this report, it is clear that the staff role was much more than facilitator, including supporter and motivator:

*"The staff try hard for you to get you the jobs and whatnot." (Client 2)*

*"They don't give up, they're determined to get you a placement if you need it or whatever you need, they'll do it...I don't think I'd have got as far as I did if it was other people. They've been there all the way. If I needed a lift you'd phone them and they'd come, and they'd give you a bus pass to get places. If you didn't have enough money to get into work, you'd be late. But if you phoned them, they'd give you a lift which saves you getting in trouble." (Client 5)*

*"They trained us up and have us doing things, like building up walls. And we can chat to them about what's going on and if you have a problem you could talk to them about the problem. Instead of letting it play on your mind." (Client 8)*

Other additional area was their enjoyment from meeting new people (6/18), which perhaps highlights a social and informal support element to Youthbuild:

*"I've enjoyed meeting new people and learning different tools." (Client 3)*

*"It was the best site ever, they'll never be a better site. We had such a laugh. It was like a family sort of thing cos you knew everyone. I clicked with everyone straight away. When we were having our tea breaks and that, we were like a family...There was one time when it was snowing, and one of the lads was walking down the street. Someone's got a snowball, threw it over the roof*

*and he's just walking to himself and it's just got him right on the head. [laughs] It was brilliant."* (Client 4)

Indeed, it appeared that the lads themselves evaluated the project in a very positive light. For example, the 'pitching' of the Project within their own social networks appears to have been based in a recognition on the part of the lads as to the usefulness of the project and support provided from the staff:

*"They were just singing our praises basically [to their friends]" one staff member remarked towards the end of the project. Indeed, although there were one or two exceptions, many of the lads recognized that having a place on the project was "an opportunity that shouldn't be messed with".* (Staff)

**Table 6.7: What trainees most disliked about Youthbuild**

What most disliked	Frequency	Percent
Nothing	9	50%
Being told what to do	1	6%
Didn't get job wanted / time to get job	3	17%
The effort (getting up / working in heat)	2	3.8
Made redundant	1	6%
Working with the others (groupwork)	2	3.8

Base: 18, 8 missing

When asked what they most disliked about their time on the project (see table above), at least half of the young people could not think of anything of note, which conversely underlines their positive experience. The half that did have things that they disliked cited a variety of things, but the most common (although only 4/18) focused on disappointments relating to employment. These individuals complained that the project did not get them the job or placement that they wanted, took too long in doing it, or that they were made redundant at the end of it:

*"The worst thing was how long it took them to get me a placement after the training. They told me that it was because they wanted to find the right placement for me."* (Client 9)

Beyond that, reference was made to problems with groupwork during the training phase (2/18), and also to the pressure or efforts for them, such as having to get up early or being told what to do (4/18):

*"It was hard work getting up so early in the morning and finishing so late. Then they started getting funny with me saying that I'd have to get down there myself rather than picking me up...He was saying that it was costing me too much money, so I'd have to get the bus and then walk. He started getting funny with me cos I was late a few times, cos of getting up in the morning. It was too early and I was getting to bed late and was tired from the day before."* (Client 6)

*“Mithering, they did mither. They did get on your case a bit if you were late and that. I got mythered at a few times, but then I’m used to it from my girlfriend” (Client 2)*

## Summary

There were some substantial shifts in the lives of young people over the period of their involvement with Youthbuild. Despite only half either completing the programme or finding early ETE, there were clear improvements that we could reasonably assume were directly related to their involvement with the project. Even if they did not find employment, Youthbuild was seen by the young people themselves as helpful to future employment – and many other aspects of their lives.

To summarise this picture, we can return to the story of our typical Youthbuild Salford client, ‘Bob’. Continuing with our homunculus, the following box outlines the typical or average outcomes that our client is likely to have had over the period of their involvement with the project:

- Finished the training phase of the programme
- Achieved his CSCS card
- More likely than not, didn’t stay right to the end of programme
- Possibly found employment at some point post-Youthbuild, although more likely not (but a much better chance than before). If he did find a job, it was probably full-time in construction, and probably earning more than jobs before Youthbuild
- But had pretty much a 50/50 chance of a “positive progress outcome”, by *either* completing *or* finding ETE at some point
- If he didn’t complete the programme, he probably dropped out during the placement period when he felt that the construction work wasn’t really for him
- No longer has ETE related problems that would get in the way of employment, and their training may well now be considered a protective factor for future employment success
- Still having trouble with money
- Still has a positive attitude to work, and found work since starting Youthbuild intrinsically satisfying
- Considered that Youthbuild was very helpful to him, and this help went way beyond employment – including organising his time, learning construction skills, trying to find work, gaining confidence and very possibly dealing with other life problems
- Probably didn’t dislike anything about Youthbuild

## 7 How the young people got on 2 – Offending and lifestyle

This second chapters examining the outcomes for young people involved with Salford Youthbuild examines any changes in offending behaviour and wider lifestyle. It considers various measures of offending patterns, including self-report offending. As part of an assessment of wider life changes, the chapter looks at self-esteem, lifestyle behaviour, life skills, health and substance misuse. Finally, the chapter considers any changes to homelife and relationships, including living arrangements and family support.

### Offending behaviour

The biggest improvements for the young people over the period since joining Youthbuild can be seen in their desistance from offending behaviour, both involving official action and self-reporting. It was noted previously that all of the young people involved in Youthbuild had been in trouble with the police previously, and that they generally had a very established criminal lifestyle and record with an average of several convictions each. Although it would not be expected that any intervention would stop all offending, even for each individual, there were clear indications of a reduction in offences as a trend. An example of this was that although almost two thirds of the young people had been *convicted* of an offence in the year up to starting Youthbuild (and just less than half in the previous six months), only a fifth of clients had even been *arrested* while involved with the project (5/25).

Another measure of dramatic improvement was that the 72% of young people (18/25) who considered that they had difficulty in keeping out of trouble with the police at the start of their involvement fell to 19% (4/21) after the end of Youthbuild.

Comparative statistics on self-reported offending show similar improvements (see table below). The mean average number of offences over a four week period after the end of their involvement was almost half that of before Youthbuild (11.38 to 20.85). The more reliable median figure was even more pronounced, showing a drop in the average from 11 offences to just 2 offences in the past four weeks. Indeed, out of the young people who admitted offending in the period before Youthbuild (and for whom we have before and after data), more than half reduced their offending (9/16) and a third desisted completely from offending during the latter period (6/16).

**Table 7.1:** *Aggregate statistics for offending in past 4 weeks, compared to before Youthbuild*

Statement	Total number of offences	Different types of offences	Total number of violent offences
Mean after Yb	11.38	1.10	0.86
Mean before Yb	20.85	4.07	3.80

Median after Yb	2	1	0
Median before Yb	11	4.5	2.5
Maximum after Yb	56	4	9
Maximum before Yb	133	8	12

Base: 21; 5 missing

Further to this reduction on numbers committing offending, and the amount of offences, there was also a reduction in number of different types of offences that the young people were committing (see table above). The mean and median average number of different types of offences committed in the past four weeks both fell from just above 4 to about 1.

The following two tables show where the reductions in this offending have occurred. Although the percentage committing each type of offence has decreased from before Youthbuild, the biggest shifts (reduction of about a third or more) were in the numbers who had “stolen something” (-42%), “got into a fight in public” (-38%), “bought drugs for own use” (-35%), “sold drugs” (-33%) and “beat up or hurt someone” (-32%). Relevant to current media and government concerns about youth crime, those who carried a weapon fell by a quarter. Indeed, when all violent offences are aggregated together we see a fall from two-thirds of the young people at the start of their involvement with the programme, to less than a third after Youthbuild (6/21).

**Table 7.2: Offending/ antisocial behaviour in past four weeks**

Statement	Number of clients	Percent	Percent before Yb
Stolen something	0	0%	42%
Driven when not meant to	2	10%	42%
Damaged or destroyed something	1	5%	23%
Carried a weapon	3	14%	38%
Got into a fight in public	5	24%	62%
Bought drugs for own use	8	38%	73%
Sold drugs to someone	1	5%	38%
Set fire to anything on purpose	0	0%	4%
Beat up or hurt someone	3	14%	46%
Threatened someone in order to get something	0	0%	15%
Something else	0	0%	23%

Base: 21; 5 missing

The second table shows that buying drugs remains the most prolific type of offence. Indeed, this has not changed particularly although the proportion of offenders had, showing that we have a smaller group with more concentrated use. All other offences were reduced in the average number of occurrences across the group. Similar to the proportions of offenders, the mean of the different types of violent offences have been reduced to just a small fraction of their previous averages across the group.



**Table 7.3: Offending/ antisocial behaviour in past four weeks**

Statement	Mean group	across group Yb	across before
Stolen something	-	0.96	
Driven when not meant to	1	3.31	
Damaged or destroyed something	0.14	0.50	
Carried a weapon	0.19	1.19	
Got into a fight in public	0.43	1.85	
Bought drugs for own use	8.19	8.04	
Sold drugs to someone	1.19	1.88	
Set fire to anything on purpose	-	0.04	
Beat up or hurt someone	0.24	1.00	
Threatened someone in order to get something	-	0.23	
Something else	-	0.27	

Base: 21; 5 missing

This desistence from crime , apart from buying drugs for their own use, was reflected in interviews with the clients. Some contrasted it with the ineffectiveness of other punishments that they'd received:

*"When I came out of prison, that didn't affect me in any way. If fact, everyone respects you more cos you've been in jail, and those who haven't been in think you're one of the boys... they'll look up to me. But now I tell them, "Nah, you want to get a job". I got my job because I'd gone on that course." (Client 8)*

*"I used to go out and have a beer on the streets everyday. But since I've been in work I've not wanted to. I've just wanted to keep my head down and get on with life. I can't be bothered getting in trouble any more, going to court. Youthbuild's helped through getting the jobs. Cos I wasn't earning the money I was just on the streets messing about all the time. It stopped me getting in trouble on the streets with the police. And before this course, I used to smoke a lot of weed. But since this course I've dropped it; I started it again, but not nowhere near as much as I used to cos I'm doing something every day. I was up in the morning doing something, I wasn't out the streets every day." (Client 6)*

The reasons given by the lads for their desistence from crime and antisocial behaviour during and after involvement with Youthbuild fell into four main interrelated themes. The first reason was that they were simply too tired after a hard days work, and they just wanted to relax and sleep during any leisure time:

*"One of the lads, he said to me, this morning, I'm knackered when I get home, I'm in bed for nine o'clock, so it's having an impact, because his mates are calling for him and he's saying get lost I'm tired, got to be up at half six for the seven o'clock bus, to get to work for eight. I mean, he was going out like a night owl, at nights, and it's taken him eight weeks to get into this routine, and he's in it now". (Staff)*

*"And when I get home I don't do naught anyway, cos I'm tired from work, I just eat my tea and that's me. It's made a big difference. At the weekends I'll have a drink, but that's it. And I'll go out with my work mates instead." (Client 8)*

The second reason given for desistence was that they need not need to get involved in property crime, such as handling stolen goods or going on burglary raids, because they had a steady income from their construction work:

*"My mates would say, "Do you want and come and do this – like sell things that they've stole". But I think, nah, what's the point cos I'm working and get a set wage. OK, they get £300 in one night, but I'm getting a wage every week and it's always there every week." (Client 8)*

*"I've got more of an attitude to work. That's what I wanted to do anyway, but Youthbuild just pointed me in the right direction; gave me some contacts, opened some doors. I work now; there's no point going out robbing for money now, I don't need to...I've got a different attitude now, I'd rather work five days a week, collect my wages and go and buy what I want...I'd rather get a job, earn a living, be respectable." (Client 4)*

Third, the young people felt that they did not want to risk spoiling the progress that they had made during with employment because of prosecution:

*"I'm not doing stuff now. No need for me to do stuff I'm doing. It's money, I had no money. Now I've got all the money I need. I'm working now ain't I so I look at things in a different light. I think about things now but before I would have just done it and then thought about it. Now, I've got all these consequences. That wouldn't have happened without Youthbuild." (Client 8)*

*"Youthbuild's got me this job now, so keep my head down getting decent money, got my own flat and independence, I'd rather keep my head low...I've got my own flat now so I just stay in with my girlfriend." (Client 7)*

Fourth, the lads felt that they had grown up during their time with Youthbuild, and particularly when starting work; they were now beyond youth crime:

*"You grow up because there are older people on site. You get a bit more sensible and think more. It reflects on your life, don't it. You grow up a bit because you're working and you've got too much to lose." (Client 1)*

## **Coping with life**

### ***Self-esteem***

The chapter on the characteristics of the young people noted the generally high self-esteem shown by the young people at the beginning of Youthbuild. Although this general pattern continued, there were a few changes of note by the time that they had finished their time on Youthbuild (see table below). Slightly more negative was that a small number of the young people felt that they were not "of worth" when they had done before (4/20), although there was no pattern of whether they had completed or

found employment. Most other statements had similar support before and after the project.

**Table 7.4: Statements of self-esteem**

Statement	Proportion agree	Percent	Percent before Yb
I'm a person of worth	16/20	80%	100%
I've a number of good qualities	19/20	95%	96%
I'm inclined to think I'm a failure	1/20	5%	4%
I'm able to do things as well as most other people	19/20	95%	100%
I feel I do not have much to be proud of	4/20	20%	24%
I take a positive attitude toward myself	19/20	95%	92%
On the whole, I'm satisfied with myself	17/20	85%	92%
I wish I could have more respect for myself	2/20	10%	56%
I feel useless at times	6/20	30%	48%
At times, I think I am no good at all	2/20	10%	24%

Base: 25/26, 1 missing

However, there was some positive shift in areas noted as being of deficit in the analysis of the 'before figures' – those concerning status and achievement. In particular, there was a large drop in those wishing for “*more respect for myself*” (-46%), feeling “*useless at times*” (-18%), and thinking “*I am no good at all*” (-14%). The issue of finding their role or proving their positive status through their involvement (including both studying in the training phase and working on-site) was reflected in comments from the lads:

*“You have the negative side coming off the youth offending. You can't get work and you always think negative. That's what helps you change when you're working and that. I had confidence in myself, but not towards working or getting out there and expressing my confidence to others and showing that I was a good worker. Youthbuild helped that.” (Client 4)*

*“It was about me proving myself.” (Client 8)*

*“It's given me a chance to prove myself. It's made things easier [to stay out of offending].” (Client 9)*

*“Getting my CSCS card. Cos I didn't think I'd pass it, studying a lot. But I started taking it home. I started getting all my questions right.” (Client 3)*

For some of these kids, making progress on Youthbuild was a considerable achievement in their lives, perhaps breaking a pathway of failure, and allowing them to challenge perceptions that they were “useless”.

*“I'm proud of sticking to it. I knew that I wanted to, but I was afraid that there was part of me wanting to slip back into my old self.” (Client 4)*

The lads were able to reflect that these achievements, together with the fact that they were playing an active role in the workforce resulted in greater confidence:

*"You feel like you're doing something for yourself and for society, paying taxes and that. You're part of the proper world, earning a living. People take notice of you. When you're a young lad people think that you're like the rest of them, a scally. So it gives you confidence." (Client 4)*

Apart from the self-awareness of having a 'job', which in itself appeared to boost the lads self-esteem, an additional source of image building appeared to come from the communities that the lads returned to after work, 'dressed' as workers:

*"The personal protective stuff? High visibility jacket, hard hat, rigger boots - they like going home in them, it's like a status symbol, because they walk past people and get respect because people think they're working. A big impact on them"<sup>8</sup>.(Staff)*

A problematic area that did not shift positively, however, was that the majority of young people (indeed, more) still felt that they were still having at least some difficulties in their life that would affect their future prospects (16/21; 76% from 64%), reminding us of the multiple difficulties in the wider lives of the clients – looked at in more detail below.

## ***Lifestyle***

From staff ratings on how each of the young people was getting on at the end of their time with Youthbuild, there are some indications that the lives outside work of the young people were gaining some positive structure. Although similar proportions were doing nothing much in their spare time (13/26; 50% from 56%) and had trouble getting up in the morning (14/26; 53% from 56%), a lot less had a problem with staying out late at night (12/26; 46% from 88%). However, the lads were quick to point out that shifting their lifestyle to reduce their late nights and ensure getting to work in the mornings was not easy:

*"It was difficult getting into that routine cos I'm used to getting up late. But once I got my clock sorted it wasn't that bad. Before YB I was staying in bed till 11 o'clock or later cos I was staying up later. Once you get used to [earlier time] it's not too bad." (Client 2)*

*"I had trouble getting up at the beginning, but I'm in a routine now, ain't I? I had two days where I was late twice, but they pulled me in and had a work with me. So I thought it's not worth it and I'll do as he says, so now I've got a full-time job. I got myself an alarm clock and I was alright." (Client 8)*

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<sup>8</sup> One of the researchers for this report was present when the personal protective gear was being handed out to the lads. Even before staff had referred to this in interviews, it was clear from observations of the lads that they cherished the boots and vests handed to them and seemed definitely 'made up' at having possession of these.

Like desistence from offending, clients referred to Youthbuild ensuring that they “grew up” and matured out of negative behaviour. This seems to tie in closely with the transition from youth to man that was the cultural focus on the building site:

*“I’ve grew up a lot since I’ve got this job. Before this job I was just drinking on the streets, before Youthbuild. All the blokes that I used to hang around with are still out drinking on the streets, my age. I’ve got three or four mates still around the streets drinking cider, 18, 19 [years old]...They’ll never get jobs them, scrape off the dole. But I’ve grew up a lot since I got this job.” (Client 7)*

In addition, fewer were now considered to be hanging around with offending peers (17/26; 65% from 92%):

*“If Youthbuild hadn’t come along I would still have been hanging around with the same [offending] people, hanging about on the streets during the day. Now I’ve got a job, haven’t I? (Client 8)*

*“I don’t associate with people now. I just associate with my brother and my one mate. I just go out with them all the time cos I’m always in the house cos I’ve got work all the time. I don’t really associate with mates anymore.” (Client 4)*

Overall, staff risk assessment indicated that there had been a positive shift in the effect that the young people’s lifestyles would have on their future employment. Although there was a similarly sized core group who had a lifestyle that would make employment “very much harder” (5/26 – not all the same people), these were among a much reduced group that the Youthbuild staff considered now had a lifestyle that would make employment more difficult (13/26; 50% from 84%). Moreover, the number whose lifestyle would have a beneficial effect on employment increased somewhat (5/26; 19% from 8%).

### ***Life skills and taking responsibility***

There was clear qualitative evidence of lads developing their interpersonal skills through their interactions on Youthbuild. As one staff recalled speaking of one of the lads in whom she’d seen a marked improvement during his time on placement:

*“I rang him on the phone and I was like, ‘Is that you Bob?’. He was speaking totally different, he just sounded like a different person, he was like are you alright, and he would never have spoken to me like that on the [training part of the ] project”.*

Indeed, the young people themselves were perceptive enough to note that their interpersonal skills, combined with confidence, had improved to the extent that they were more outgoing and communicative with others. It also seems to reflect becoming more comfortable with shifting to the culture of the building site, that would enable them to confidently take on future work in that context:

*"I know I've changed in my people skills. If someone's coming on site, you talk to everyone. Some people on first look I thought, I don't like him. Then I found out by talking that they were alright. In the past I would never have bothered talking. If I didn't like them, that would be it."* (Client 8)

Related to interpersonal skills, the staff noted that the young people were becoming more mature in their attitudes to responsibilities. Even if subtle, this staff member noted how the client was showing signs of taking responsibility through his work by letting them know if he was going to be absent for work or training:

*"I thought, oh god, he's always late, he was coming in stoned and I thought I'm going to fail here at this... but I thought he'd achieved something there actually getting on his bike to pedal down there and say he wasn't coming in, because some of the lads just didn't bother, they just said they wanted a day off and didn't even bother to phone"* (Staff)

These small changes in a sense of responsibility point to a wider moral development on the part of the lads, who, according to staff observations, did come to feel they would be "letting a lot of people down" if they didn't commit to their training and placements.

## **Health**

There seemed to be a more dramatic improvement in the health of the young people, as assessed by both the Youthbuild staff and the young people themselves. It had been noted in the chapter on the young people that having health problems was a dominant characteristic across the board – but this was no longer the case by the end of their involvement with the programme. Whereas before the programme, staff considered that every one of the young people to have at least one health problem (of various types), this had been reduced to just under a third (8/26; 31%). Consequently, whereas the staff's initial assessments had suggested that three-quarters of the young people had health problems that would make it harder to succeed in employment, this figure was now less than a quarter (6/26; 23%).

Moreover, these shifts were very much in line with changes in assessments made by the young people themselves. It had been previously noted that about two-thirds had considered that they had at least some difficulty with their health, but this had been reduced to the minority (8/21; 38% from 64%). Specifically, the percentage with some physical health difficulties had halved (6/21; 29% from 60%), and the proportion reporting some emotional health problems had gone from half the young people to a third (7/21).

However, it is worth noting that the work placement, and the 'culture shock' associated with it, could also well increase emotional health strain on the young people during the programme. The demands of the training and stresses and strains of placement could become sometimes too much for some of the younger and less prepared lads. One staff member reported that on more than one occasion some of her lads had "welled up" and become visibly upset.

There was also some evidence that for a small number of young people, in particular circumstances, their emotional and mental health issues might be exacerbated to problematic levels when they went on-site. Particular trigger factors seemed to be more than client on a site, existing mental health issues, and cannabis misuse. One of the disadvantages of putting lads on the same site at the same time was a *sense of competition* that the staff recognized. This had the potential to be beneficial, but there was also evidence that it became elevated to the level of paranoia. This seemed to be exacerbated by two things – mental and emotional health issues and cannabis, and at its worse a combination of the two (a point also made by some employers). Both the drug issue and the mental health issue would be things staff would work hard to support those lads affected over the course of the programme by either intervening themselves or seeking support from others.

### ***Substance misuse***

Improvements were evident in relation to the particular health area of substance misuse. Whereas staff had previously assessed that a large majority of the young people had at least one area of difficulty related to substance misuse, this had been reduced to just over half by the end of the programme (14/26; 54% from 88%). In addition, there was a large reduction in the proportion for whom it was considered that their use and misuse of substances would make it harder for them to succeed in employment (14/26; 54% from 96%), and some reduction in the numbers who would find it “very much harder” (7/26; 27% from 39%).

Again, the young people’s own views supported the perceived shifts in the staff’s subjective risk assessments. The proportion who reported a problem of any degree with alcohol fell sharply from almost 1 in 2 to 1 in 7 (3/21; 14% from 40%), and those reporting drugs problems was also reduced, albeit less markedly (8/21; 38% from 48%).

Similar to desistence from crime generally, the daily regime seems also to have had an impact on drug use. Referring to cannabis, one staff member revealed:

*“Some of them now only take it on the weekend because they know they’ve got work on a Monday, they don’t take it on a daily basis now. One of them was taking it to help him sleep, and he’s now that knackered he sleeps anyway now”.*

### **Homelife and relationships**

#### ***Living arrangements***

Although there have been shown to be big improvements in several areas of the young people’s lives, including ETE and offending rates, these seemed to have been occurring against a background of continued difficulties in their homelife. Similar numbers before and after Youthbuild were assessed by staff as having serious problems with their living

arrangements, including family arguments (14/26; 54% from 60%). Likewise, there was little difference in the proportion of the young people that staff considered had living arrangements that would make it harder to succeed in employment (14/26; 54% from 48%), nor those where it would be "very much harder" (6/26; 23%). It was the same situation for the minority whose living arrangements would make it easier to succeed in employment (7/26; 27% from 20%).

This finding of a lack of improvement in homelife and living arrangement was supported by data from the young people themselves. Similar numbers (in fact, slightly more) considered that there were at least some difficulties in their life at home (12/21; 57% from 48%). It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that when asked about factors that may have made working more difficult during their time on the programme, about a third of the young people (5/17 who answered; 30%) cited problems with their family and homelife:

*"I got kicked out [of home] a few weeks ago, but that's been boiling up for a while." (Client 9)*

Indeed, in practice there were several cases cited where staff thought parents were less than supportive of either their sons achievements, or the work of the project itself, indeed there were reports of some parents being complicit in the 'bad behaviour' of some lads on the project ("making excuses" for absence from training or placement being the most obvious example of this). There were also more serious (albeit isolated) cases where domestic experiences had directly affected participation in the project:

*"One of the lads phoned up and said he couldn't go to work because his dad had kicked off with the neighbours the night before and he was tired, or his mum had had a party and had him up all night" (Staff)*

Siblings also presented additional contingencies that some of the lads were reported by staff as having had to deal with:

*"...one of the lads said he had been arrested over the weekend and had spent the whole weekend in prison, in the cells; nothing to do with him, his brother and his cousin had been stabbed and the police were adamant that he was there, when he wasn't".*

Although the majority of the lads were still living in parental homes, there were those who had a more independent residential status. It was noted that the Youthbuild staff would help the young people find accommodation, making the effort to take them to viewings etc:

*"I got the flat about a month ago. Youthbuild helped me get it, took me down to viewings and that. [Staff] took me down to view some flats and help me sort it out...I was living in a hostel before and the contract was up. Working here all day, I couldn't have been able to get to see flats." (Client 7)*

However, those lads who had left their parental homes found additional issues to deal with, as in the following example:



*"we had one young person who showed up on site on the second day of work, his girlfriend is being quite demanding, and has lots of mental health things going on, and had said I'm going to check myself into [Mental Health Institution] if you don't come home."*

There was some substantial improvement in the numbers that the Youthbuild staff thought would have at least one problem in their neighbourhood that could increase the risks to both employment and offending (12/26; 46% from 100%). However, this made only a modest difference to the proportion who would find that these problems would affect their chances of employment success (11/26; 42% from 56%) and a similar proportion to before who would find it "very much harder" (5/26; 19% from 20%).

### ***Relationships and family support***

Although their living arrangements and stressors from those around them outside of Youthbuild may not have improved considerably, there was some improvement recorded in the way that the young people related to family and friends. Whilst still the majority, there was, for instance a reduction in the number of young people that staff considered had at least one problem with relationships (including tension with childhood family, rows with partner) (16/26; 62% from 84%). There was a similar reduction in the proportion of the young people who themselves reported that they were having at least some difficulties with how they were getting on with others (6/21; 29% from 44%). Overall, the proportion of young people whose employment success was thought by staff to be at risk from these relationship difficulties also saw a similar moderate reduction (14/26; 54% from 72%), with the number whose relationships were thought likely to increase success were increased to over a quarter (7/26; 27% from 16%).

Analysis in the chapter on the characteristics of the young people (Chapter 3) noted that staff considered that almost half had little communication or interest from family, considered to be a particular risk to success in the project and employment success. This was somewhat improved by the end of the programme, with only a quarter then getting no interest or communication (6/26; 23% from 40%).

However, these improvements in relationships and communication did not translate into more support for the young people in their involvement with the project or more generally. There was both worsening in the proportion of the young people who reported difficulties in help and support generally (13/21; 62% from 50%), and the number considered by staff to have at least one adult supportive of their involvement with Youthbuild (18/26; 69% from 83%).

Nevertheless, there were a number of important examples given qualitatively by both staff and the young people themselves of how important supportive adults had been to them. It was clear that the enthusiasm from family and friends for the programme and individuals' success was appreciated by the young people (and the staff). Several lads, for example, were clearly eager for their parents to find out about their success:

*"I've had one of the young lads asking me would I phone his dad and his mum and his girlfriend and his girlfriend's mum to tell them how well he's doing!" (Staff).*

*"...from working with other young people before, you're often ringing parents with bad news and it's just as important to ring them with good news, it's paramount. The kids are loving it, it motivates them, it means more to them because their family are chuffed with them as well as we are, and it's a big part of it..." (Staff)*

One staff member recalled. Indeed, there seemed to be genuine recognition on the part of some parents and other family members as to what the project was doing for their sons. One staff member proudly recalled, *"I had a phone call last week off one lad's mum thanking me for the work we've done with him"*. And another:

*"...his mum said before he came on the project he was like on a downer...And he couldn't seem to get out of the rut he was in and I think with the help of the project he did eventually get out the rut and then he did see the light at the end of the tunnel." (Staff)*

Moreover, the enthusiasm and support of family members (particularly adult family members), when present, was considered by the young people as qualitatively important. This included both emotional / motivational support:

*"They help with motivation really. She mithers me to get a job, so I get out and get a job, don't I? There's the motivation there off them. One time I got up late and she was like phoning a taxi for me and getting me the money and making sure that I got there. Sometimes when you're tired you can't be bothered. I wouldn't have given up but I would have phoned in lagging it a couple of times." (Client 2)*

And more practical/financial support:

*"My dad used to get me up, but he didn't get up till late himself. But they helped me a lot with money when we were on the low wages bit, and they helped me to get up and that. So they helped me a lot really." (Client 8)*

*"I had my dad, so I was always in on time, never late. My dad helped me, and then I got into a routine. But he still gets up to make sure that I'm up, but I've been waking up myself. But [at first] my punctuality would have been low so I've got a big credit towards my dad for that and that cos for a couple of months it was down to my dad." (Client 4)*

*"My mum and dad gave me money to get down town [to work]. Kept telling me to stick at it, being supportive. But I was going to stick to it anyway." (Client 5)*

It is interesting to note that in the absence of a supportive adult at home, Youthbuild staff would sometimes go the extra mile to take on aspects of that role:

*"Lesley used to ring me every morning to get me up. I would have got up eventually, but kept pressing 'snooze' (laughs)...Lesley's supported me." (Client 3)*

## Success stories

Against this backdrop of problems, staff were able to quite easily identify lads who had excelled, and perhaps epitomized what the project was all about, and it is only fair to spend some time here pointing to those success stories. Indeed, whilst talking about the Project's success stories during interviews, staff noticeably 'perked up' (often after having spoken in quite negative terms about issues such as early disorganization and the lack of external support (by far the two biggest bones of contention across interviews). Over the course of the interviews, Youthbuild staff were asked if they could select any positive cases, and negative ones. There was no shortage of examples of good cases:

*"There's one I can think of now who was just fabulous...his family had total anti social behaviour, involved with crime, neighbours hacking axes through his front door, police in the middle of the night...and still getting up at six to go to work...we used to use him as a shining example, and you could tell he'd never had praise in his whole life, ever, and we picked up on that immediately and that's how he grew, we were just praising him and praising him and using him as a good example and it really motivated him and he was determined to get through this, but that came from within him, with all his battles and difficulties (he was still on an order at the youth offending team) he'd not committed any new offences."* (Staff)

And another:

*"He's kind of woke up and realised what kind of life he's been leading and he's just realised and he's realised the opportunity... he's completely turned his life around".* (Staff)

## Summary

There were some substantial shifts in the lives of young people over the period of their involvement with Youthbuild. Despite only half either completing the programme or finding early ETE, there were clear improvements that we could reasonably assume were directly related to their involvement with the project. In particular, there were dramatic improvements to the young people's offending rates, whether they got in trouble with the police, their health, their substance misuse, and their self-respect. Furthermore, even if they did not find employment, Youthbuild was seen by the young people themselves as helpful to future employment – and many other aspects of their lives.

To summarise this picture, we can return to the story of our typical Youthbuild Salford client, 'Bob'. Continuing with our homunculus, the following box outlines the typical or average outcomes that our client is likely to have had over the period of their involvement with the project:

- Not been arrested since starting Youthbuild, and not finding it difficult to keep out of trouble with the police – quite a change from his past!
- Offending a lot less than before – probably a couple of times in the past month – and only one type of offence (probably buying some drugs)
- Probably no longer committing violent offences
- Still feeling pretty positive about himself, and with much more self-respect
- Getting some positive structure in his life, such as less likely to be hanging out with offending peers (although quite possible) and less of a problem staying out late at night – so that there is a reduced risk of it lifestyle getting in the way of employment prospects
- No longer has health problems
- Less chance of substance misuse (now 50/50), and less chance of it affecting work chances
- Still having problems with living arrangements
- Had some improvement in relationships with family and friends, but not finding any more support there

## 8 Conclusion and recommendations

### Summary of chapters

After outlining the aims and objectives of the study (chapter 1) together with the range of data sources drawn upon and data collection methods used (chapter 2), we began to paint a picture of Youthbuild by first outlining the client characteristics (chapter 3). We then moved on to consider the implementation of the project; the story of how Youthbuild developed in practice, focusing on the set-up and training (chapter 4) and placement trial and full-pay phases (chapter 5). Against this backdrop of obvious high levels of difficulties in client backgrounds and lives at the time of joining Youthbuild, and detailed analysis of the implementation of the project, we were able to assess and evaluate the impact of Youthbuild on the young people in terms of their progress and employment success (chapter 6) and offending and lifestyle (chapter 7). We identified clear improvements for the young people in a range of areas, ones which could reasonably be assumed to be related to their involvement with the project (for example in offending rates, health, substance misuse, self-respect). Together, the chapters charted the course of Youthbuild, from its beginnings to completion and incorporated the experiences and perspectives of, and impact of the project on, its three key participants – Youthbuild staff, placement employers and the young people themselves.

### The impact of Youthbuild

#### *The impact of Youthbuild on the young people*

This evaluation had two main limitations, known to researchers and funders from the beginning: 1) The population size was limited to the restricted numbers who were recruited to Youthbuild, and this had implications for statistical significance testing; and 2) there here was no comparison group available for the first year (this was planned for the second year, but the project ended). Both of these affect the reliability of measuring impact and the conclusions that can be reached. It is clear that there have been substantial shifts in these young people's lives between the time that they started the programme and the end of their time with it, but we cannot say for certainty whether these shifts would be generalisable to a broader group or that they were definitely due to Youthbuild and might not have happened anyway. Nevertheless, at the very least we can see these findings as indicative of change brought about by the project, and differences that were brought about in the lives of these young people at the time.

In addition, there are three very good reasons to conclude that these differences were, at least in part, due to the impact of Youthbuild. Firstly, the consistency of improvements, and the pattern of which elements were improved and to what extent would certainly suggest very strongly that Youthbuild had a direct impact. For example, the biggest changes were in the areas directly targeted by the project – employment and offending,

and changes in other areas would intuitively fit with anticipated outcomes – like increased status and sense of achievement.

Secondly, the themes from the qualitative interviews supported the impact findings established by the quantitative shifts – eg the reasons given for desistence from crime can all be related to involvement with the project. And thirdly, the quantitative self-report surveys with the young people showed that they found the project very helpful in a variety of ways. Consequently, short of the above level of certainty, we can be as sure as possible that Youthbuild played an important role in the changes that were taking place in these young people's lives at the time and was central to the identified improvements in their lives. It would be difficult to conclude other than Youthbuild made substantial outcome contributions to the lives of the young people.

The following table maps these substantial contributions directly onto the NCH Outcomes Framework, which is itself based on the Government's Every Child Matters outcomes framework. Within this framework it is clear that there are substantial contributions made by Youthbuild to several indicators of improvement across lives of the young people including the aims: Be healthy (substantial contribution to 4 indicators of improvement); stay safe (2 indicators); enjoy and achieve (4 indicators); make a positive contribution (5 indicators); and economic well being (3 indicators).

*Table 8.1: Youthbuild substantial contributions to the NCH outcomes framework*

Indicator	Relevant Youthbuild Findings	Substantial contribution
<b>Be healthy</b>		<b>4 indicators</b>
1. The health and development needs of a young person are identified	There were substantial steps taken to assess the risks and problems of each young person, including NCH forms. The staff took an individual approach to the young people and addressing their needs – including giving them lifts to work.	✓
2. The child or young person recognises their own health and development needs	The clients showed awareness of their difficulties and problems in self-report forms.	✗
3. Parents/carers capacity to promote their child's health and development is enhanced	Youthbuild did not work directly with supporters. Support did not increase.	✗
4. There is an improvement in a young person's emotional well-being	Emotional health problems (self-reported) were reduced substantially. Self-esteem was always high, but there was progress in status and self-respect.	✓
5. There is an improvement in a young person's physical health	There was a substantial fall in numbers with physical health problems observed and reported, and also in those where health problems would	✓

	affect employment success.	
6. A young person with life limiting illness maintains maximum independence	-	✗
7. A young person attends essential appointments	Staff made particular efforts to make sure that clients were up on time and got to work. No contribution in relation to health etc appointments.	✗
8. The use of harmful substances is reduced	There were clear improvements in substance misuse, both in relation to alcohol and drugs. Reduction in number with difficulties in this area as well as the proportion where this would affect employment success.	✓
<b>Stay safe</b>		<b>2 indicators</b>
9. Risks to the young person are known and protective factors are in place	Although the project was building on the skills of the young person, building protective factors was not a key focus.	✗
10. The young person knows about risk to their safety and how to deal with them	Taken literally, the project ran training in health and safety at work. The clients achieved qualifications in this area. There was informal guidance addressing problems beyond that.	✓
11. The young person lives safely within the family or placement	Although not central to the project aims, the difficult living arrangements for the young people did not improve and continued to be a risk to future employment success.	✗
12. The young person feels safe within the family network or placement	Not a focus.	✗
13. The strengths and limitations of parent/carer capacity are identified.	Not a focus.	✗
14. The extent and limitations of the parent/carer's responsibility for the young person is understood	Not a focus.	✗
15. Parent/carer's capacity to cope with difficulties is enhanced	Not a focus	✗
16. The quality of family life is enhanced	Not a focus. Problems in homelife, including family arguments, were not improved.	✗
17. The young person maintains a supportive relationship with significant others.	Fewer young people had problems with close relationships, and fewer had relationships that would put employment at risk. There were improvements in communication and interest from family. However, this did not translate into more support from significant others.	✓ (but not support)
18. The young person has suitable accommodation	See 11. above	✗
<b>Enjoy and achieve</b>		<b>4 indicators</b>

19. The young person achieves satisfactory attendance at school, further education, training or in employment	All young people completed their training course as part of Youthbuild. There was an increase in the numbers in ETE compared to the period before the programme. Improvement in intrinsic satisfaction from work undertaken.	✓
20. The young person is able to contribute in a learning environment	There was a dramatic improvement in the proportion of young people considered to have ETE problems, and those with problems affecting employment chances.	✓
21. There is an improvement in a young person's ETE achievement	The vast majority achieved their Health and Safety card. The project was helpful in providing construction skills. Also see 19. above	✓
22. A young person avoids exclusion	Not strictly relevant	✗
23. A young person has supportive friendships	Socialisation was an aspect appreciated by the young people. Conversely, association with peer offenders was reduced. Not a focus on supportive friendships per se.	✗
24. The young person engages safely in a leisure activity of their choice	There were improvements in the lifestyle of the young people, which was less likely to be problematic for work. Less were staying out late at night. However, there was no increase in productive leisure.	(✓) Safer
25. The child's ethnicity and heritage needs are met	Not a focus.	✗
26. The young person is able to express their ambitions for the future	Substantial planning and preparing for future work, but no focus on ambitions per se. Placements not always tailored to interests of young people.	✗
<b>Make a positive contribution</b>		<b>5 indicators</b>
27. The young person's views are sought, heard and contribute to decision making	The young people were encouraged to take a responsible attitude to their situations and make appropriate choices. Focus on taking responsibility in work and in life. Encouraged to make job applications etc.	✓
28. The young person makes informed choices	See 26 and 27 above.	✓
29. The young person makes a change in their life	The project enabled a good proportion to enter into employment, as well as other significant developments including moving home.	✓
30. The young person's social skills improve	Youthbuild was considered by the young people to help them organise their time, gain confidence and deal with problems in life. Reduction in offending behaviour and getting in trouble with the police.	✓
31. The young person's	Not a key focus	✗



communication skills improve		
32. The young person deals appropriately with conflict	Not a key focus, but decrease in violent offences.	✗
33. The young person plans or participates in an activity that benefits others	Not a focus	✗
34. The young person is able to understand other's emotions including the impact on a victim.	Not a focus	✗
35. Bullying, discriminatory and/or anti social behaviour is reduced	Not a focus. See 36 below.	✗
36. The young person does not offend (or reoffend)	Substantial improvements in offending rates and those getting in trouble. Particular decrease in theft and violent crime.	✓
<b>Economic well being</b>		<b>3 indicators</b>
37. The family income is maximised	Beyond increased employment, there was an increase in the average wage of the young people.	✓
38. There is an improvement in the financial management skills of the young person's parent/carers	Not a focus. However, it is worth noting that finance was a problematic area for the young people.	✗
39. There is an improvement in the living conditions of the young person.	Although their neighbourhood was considered to be less of a problem after Youthbuild, there were no improvements in living arrangements.	✗
40. The young person is able to sustain a tenancy	Not a focus	✗
41. The risk of homelessness is reduced	Not a focus	✗
42. A young person remains in education, training or employment after 16	See 19 above.	✓
43. There is an improvement in the young person's practical life skills	See 30 above. Considered by the young people to be helpful overall, including learning how to organise their time. Focus on different life skills, including and beyond employment.	✓

### *The impact of Youthbuild on the staff*

What had the potential to develop into a negative experience for Youthbuild staff turned out to be an essentially fulfilling and rewarding one. Staff were able to support most of those clients selected for participation through their training and placements. The keyworking role was central to the success of the project, and staff invariably expressed professional and personal satisfaction at having been able to function effectively (and on occasion beyond the call of duty) in this role. The success of the project seems to have in no small part been due to the on-the-ground pragmatism and reflective practice of the

Youthbuild manager and her three staff. There were clearly issues that caused concern and what might be seen as some degree of stress for staff, from recruitment and early organisation through to the termination of the project. However, through their ongoing commitment to the project staff were able to deal with these and guide the project to a generally positive outcome.

### *The impact of Youthbuild on the employers*

Importantly, employers generally agreed that they would participate in such a project if asked again. This in itself suggests that the impact on employers was largely positive. There was general praise for the underlying aims and rationale of Youthbuild, which seemed to invoke not only a recognition of the economic benefits of participation in the project but also moral ones. However, there were some concerns about those clients who were not yet prepared or ready for the transition to the workplace. This was related to issues of ownership and supervision. This accommodation to non-prepared clients and keyworking demands appeared to be the main negative impacts on employers, however, ones which did not appear to deter possible participation in the future.

### **Youthbuild: A summary of successes and problems**

#### *Successes*

From the discussion and analysis in the preceding chapters, it is possible to identify a set of clear successes and limitations over the course of the project. These can be summarised as follows:

- The recruitment of the appropriate client group of challenging young people at risk of both re-offending and unemployment
- Staff sensitivity to the emergent needs of the client group with an ability to respond quickly and appropriately when these manifested themselves
- Clear development good and effective project staff team-working, including peer-to-peer support and advice
- Reflective practice leading to more effective management of the project as it progressed
- Development of effective keyworking relationship with clients
- Training of the client group towards eventual Health and Safety award (CSCS test) for the majority of clients
- The provision of holistic support for clients in addition to the central training and placement objectives of the project (e.g. helping with housing, stress, anger, relationship issues)
- Identification of co-operative and accommodative placement employers
- Continuing support of clients whilst on placement (including crisis management)

- Placement employer appreciation of and sensitivity to the particular needs and difficulties experienced by the client group
- General client satisfaction with placements (although not necessarily generalised to all work)
- Relative increase in clients' affluence and budgeting skills
- Improvements in clients' self-esteem in relation to perceived status and achievements
- Dramatic improvements in offending behaviour
- Reductions in problematic lifestyles affecting employability
- Dramatic improvement in the health, and reduction in substance misuse, for the clients
- Improvement of clients' life skills and ability to deal with wider problems
- Clients recognition that the project was relevant and helpful, irrespective of whether they completed the programme successfully (clients considered Youthbuild as having opened employment doors and generally 'turned around' their working lives)
- Substantial reduction in clients regarded as having ETE problems that could affect employability
- Positive progression outcome (completed programme or entered ETE) for the majority of clients

### ***Problems and limitations***

In addition to the clear successes, the preceding chapter have identified various problems encountered by the staff, clients and employers can also be outlined. These can be outlined as follows:

- Initially poor training environment
- Lack of lead-in time causing early implementation problems (e.g. delayed staff start dates, early staff turnover, early programme delivery problems)
- Perceived difficulties in organisational support and communication, causing some feelings of isolation for this satellite project
- Some initial lack of preparedness
- Breakdown in effective partnership working and perceived lack of support and co-operation from other agencies
- Early difficulties regarding establishing client expectations and obligations
- Delays in securing placements for some clients
- Lack of commitment and attitudinal problems on the part of some clients

- Lack of 'cultural' preparedness on the part of some clients (for working life generally and the demands of construction-site culture more specifically)
- Potential conflict of interests in the clients whilst on placement (between project staff and placement employers)
- Tensions between the need to adequately support needy client group and giving the impression of 'mothering' within a 'macho' occupational culture
- Negative emotional and mental health impacts from the culture shock of placement for some younger or less prepared clients.
- Client dissatisfaction and resentment of clients with the low wages during the trial period of placement
- Risk of employer exploitation of project paid trial period / early laying off of clients
- Unforeseen economic downturn leading to contraction of labour market and reduction in placement opportunities
- Limited number of clients completing the whole programme and finding education, training or employment afterwards (partly due to economic downturn)
- No real improvement in homelife and living arrangements
- Continued lack of familial support for employment for a large proportion of clients.
- Abrupt curtailment of keyworker support due to termination of funding for project

### **Did Youthbuild meet its aims and objectives?**

The Introduction to this report noted various aims and objectives for Salford Youthbuild in different documentation. Below are summary comments on whether the evidence points to achievement in each objective:

- *A reduction in offending behaviour*  
The evidence suggested remarkable success in this area. By a variety of measures, the clients' offending behaviour was substantially reduced by the end of their involvement with Salford Youthbuild.
- *A reduction in anti-social behaviour*  
The evidence suggested success in this area. Low level disorderly behaviour, numbers using drugs, and negative lifestyles were all reduced.
- *Improvements in learning and employability*  
The evidence suggested success in this area. The clients obtained their CSCS cards, and evidence suggested a reduction in ETE problems.
- *Help construction partners meet their corporate social responsibilities*  
The evidence suggested success in this area. Employers played a full role in Salford Youthbuild. There was the danger, however, that some employers may

have been 'using' clients for cheap labour before laying them off when they cost more to employ. In addition, economic conditions limited or ended the involvement of some employers.

- *Offer recruitment opportunities in an increasingly difficult skilled labour market*  
The evidence was mixed, with partial success. 20 out of 26 clients had the opportunity for a trial period in the construction industry, and 11 held full-pay contracts.
- *Sustainable employment outcomes for 80% of clients*  
The project did not meet this target, with only 50% of clients in employment at the time of the last data collection. However, this is not necessarily a negative reflection on the project. Analysis showed that the challenging the young people were in terms of background, health and attitudes to work, the lower the progression measures of success. Therefore, there is a trade-off for projects between levels of employment success and the extent to which you recruit the most challenging young people. Salford Youthbuild focused more on the latter. Consequently, it is perhaps more useful to rely on the measures of improvement that show 'extent travelled' for each young person.

### **Recommendations for similar projects**

Based on our analysis and interpretation of the data in the preceding chapters, we would suggest the following recommendations for any future Youthbuild or similar projects. This is not an exhaustive list, and we hope the reader will take time to consult the preceding chapters for a full picture of the various phases of Youthbuild and experiences and perspectives of its key participants. However, the following list represents issues that we feel future similar projects should take into account:

- Avoid delayed and staggered intake of staff
- Ensure the project is 'ready to go' from the outset (possibly having some lead-in / induction time for staff before the clients arrive)
- Establish and sustainable and effective lines of communication between on-the-ground staff and higher line management
- Ensure the working environment is fit for purpose. This should include training spaces that are clean, warm, well ventilated and safe
- At client selection, staff to consider the extent to which they select and recruit on the basis of likely "success" or on greater need
- Establish relationships with partner agencies early on in the project
- Attempt to identify clients who may need extra support. Once identified, consider drawing up a client support plan together with the client and partner agencies
- Ensure clients are made aware from the outset of the aims and objectives of the project (including the nature of activities and goals they are required to achieve)
- Try to establish links with clients' families (ideally supportive individuals)

- Take steps to incorporate of family members (parents, partners etc) through, for example, an 'open day' near to the start of clients training, in order to increase home support and provide encouragement and positive reinforcement for clients. Consider incorporating some form of feedback for families (e.g. letters confirming completion of training, certificates, other 'rewards')
- Establish early links with employers
- Consider incorporating 'taster' placements for clients near to the start of the project to ensure the right clients have been selected
- Clients might be required to sign a learning agreement which could include details of expectations staff have of them, and their obligations to the project (this might include a set of both training and placement 'ground rules' – in respect of the placement phase, employers could be consulted on the content of the agreement)
- In terms of managing client expectations of the project, ensure clients are aware that progression from the training to placement phase is not guaranteed and is dependent on them proving to staff that they are ready for placement (a note could also be made about the sensitivity of the construction industry to economic downturns)
- Consider extending the element of the training period that addresses adjusting to the "realities of work" culture on a building site, or alternatively, whether there needs to be a change of emphasis in training.
- More activities to prepare clients for the cultural demands of the construction industry. Consider having 'in-reach' activities for placement employers. For example, employers (and current employees) may take an active role in assessment of work done by clients during training. The use of peer-to-peer assessment by younger employees from the destination sites (this could even be past Youthbuild 'graduates') may encourage the kind of 'banter' reported as being a feature of construction site culture (in effect bringing and on-site culture into the training environment). Staff may monitor client interaction and use this to assess clients' 'cultural preparedness'
- Manage the expectations of clients' low level wages of any trial or placement phase. Perhaps make it clear that placement is as much an on-site extension of the training phase as the beginning of their working
- Only have one young person placed per company in order to (a) reduce the risk of emotional or mental health harm caused by competition, and (b) remove the danger of the development of oppositional culture (i.e. two or more clients taking a collective stance against the ground rules of placement)
- Staff to work closely with employers in clarifying the issue of 'ownership' of the clients.
- Recognise the 'macho' nature of the construction occupational culture and work closely with employers to collaboratively support clients in a way appropriate to

this occupational cultural framework (for example exercising more discretion in where and when keyworkers meet with clients)

- Consider employing more male keyworkers to counter the impressions of 'mothering' and overcome potential problems with authority in the training phase
- Arrange for a 'leaver's' event at the end of each cohort for clients, employers, home supporters and staff. This would consolidate prior involvement in the project for the key participants and help to avoid the impression of abrupt curtailment of project involvement (one idea here might be to have photoboard, which could be placed in the training rooms for future cohorts to see)
- Look for longer term funding plans for projects supporting young people to enable stability, exit strategies for projects on short term funding

### **Final thoughts and looking to the future**

The positive journey for many young people involved with Salford Youthbuild was very clear from this evaluation. Indeed, the extent of change in some areas – particularly offending behaviour – was extremely unusual for any intervention. The combination of evidence presented convinces us that Youthbuild was, at least, the catalyst for positive changes for the lads. To this extent, it is difficult not to regret strongly the ending of this intervention, and recommend that it is restarted, or that funding be allocated to projects that can learn the clear lessons from this experience.

Essentially, this report has told the story of an intervention that enabled young offenders to become valued (including self-valued) members of the community. It was a story of transitions and positive adopting of identities. It saw clients move from the culture of youth crime to the culture of work, incorporating some difficult rites of passage that involved the 'lads' becoming responsible 'men'. And showed how NGOs, local authorities, practitioners and the wider community can work together to enable this process.

The success of young people in making a success of their work placements, and also making changes in their wider lives, seemed to depend on how well they coped with these rites of passage and negotiate the cultural shift. Consequently, the project raised some interesting and far-reaching questions about how to better prepare young people for this cultural shift, and then how to provide support to needy young clients within a very masculine cultural framework that emphasised standing on your own two feet.

Finally, it is important to remind ourselves that these are not just aggregate statistical changes. Individual lads were clear that the project had revolutionised their lives ways that went far beyond the scope an employment initiative. Although the project has ended, Salford Youthbuild has left its mark for these young 'men':

*"I owe everything to Youthbuild, I must say, cos they got me my first job, got me in work, put me on a health and safety course, opened a few more doors for me. Best thing in my life, Youthbuild." (Client 4)*

*"Basically they've [Youthbuild] given me a second chance in life. I've turned my life around since I got this job. Come out the hostel, got my own flat...[Wouldn't have current girlfriend because] I'd just be in the hostel, no money, drinking every night, on the streets. No girl would look at me cos I didn't have a job and living in a hostel. Now I've got my own flat, money, nice girlfriend. It's turned my life right around." (Client 7)*



## About the authors



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Neal is Director of the Salford Centre for Social Research. He specialises in sensitive research with young people. He has extensive experience of directing research and evaluations for central and local government and NGOs, including the evaluation of the Detention and Training Order (YJB). His publications include "Parenting in Poor Environments" (with Ghate).



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Rob's past research includes work on youth gangs, establishing forums for young offenders, and the experiences of stigmatised adults. He has a strong interest in the ethnographic method. His theoretical interests include the analysis of social interaction in everyday life.

The **Salford University Centre for Social Research** specialises in working closely with policy makers, practitioners and the wider community to produce relevant, engaged and influential research. By combining a wide range of subject and methods expertise, the Centre brings a huge research knowledge base to bear on key social issues. Staff disciplinary backgrounds include Criminology, Sociology, Social Policy, Law, Geography, and Cultural Studies. Methods specialisms include large-scale evaluations, national quantitative surveys, qualitative studies on sensitive topics, and involving children and young people.

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